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THE NABOB

A STORY OF PARISIAN LIFE

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THE NABOB

VOL. III.

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THE NABOB

A STORY OF PARISIAN LIFE AND MANNERS

BY

ALPHONSE DAUDET

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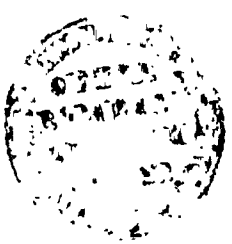
TRANSLATED BY E. CLAVEQUIN



IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. III.

KX-d-22

LONDON
SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE
1878

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THE THIRD VOLUME.

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THE NABOB.

CHAPTER I.

JENKINS' PEARLS.

About a week after his encounter with Moëssard, which, by the way, had rendered the confused state of his affairs still more entangled, Jansoulet drove one Thursday to Mora's residence, straight from the Chamber. He had not returned thither since his violence in the Rue Royale, and he dreaded to find himself in the presence of the Duke, as much as any schoolboy ever did to answer the head-master's summons after a row in class. But he could not help it; he must undergo the ordeal of that first interview. It was rumoured in the committees that Le

Merquier had finished his report, a masterpiece of logic and ferocity, recommending that Jansoulet's election should be quashed. This recommendation was sure to be acted upon, unless Mora, all-powerful in the Assembly, should himself come in and exercise his influence in favour of his friend. This was a serious thing for the Nabob, as you perceive, a thing which coloured his cheeks with the glow of fever, as he sat studying his face and smiles in the bevelled mirrors of his coach. He was trying to find some ingenious way of presenting himself, one of those strokes of good-natured impudence, which had made his fortune with Ahmed, and had hitherto been successful also with the French Duke. But, for all that, his heart beat high, and a cold shiver ran between his shoulders—as happens to all of us in the minutes which precede a decisive visit, even though we go and pay it in a gilt chariot.

He reached Mora's mansion by the water gate, and was astonished to see the porter

directing the carriages to the Rue de Lille entrance, in order that the water gate might be kept free for the carriages leaving the 'Hôtel.' He asked himself somewhat uneasily: 'What can be the matter here?' Perhaps the Duchess was giving a concert, or there might be a charity bazaar, or some other thing of the same sort, from which Mora excluded him because of the scandal of his last adventure. His misgivings increased when, having crossed the court of honour, amid the slamming of carriage-doors and the dull continuous rumbling of wheels on the sand, he passed into the immense hall, filled with a crowd who did not seem to go farther, but moved anxiously round the porter's table, whereon all the celebrated names of Paris were being written down in books. It was as if a blast of misfortune had passed over this house, swept away some of its arrogant calm, and filtered through its comfort a breath of anxiety and danger.

'What a misfortune!'

'Ah! it is terrible!'

'So sudden, too!'

Some such exclamations did men exchange.

An idea flashed through Jansoulet's mind:

'Is the Duke unwell?' he asked of a servant.

'Ah! sir. He is dying. He cannot pass the night.'

If the roof of the palace had fallen upon his head, Jansoulet could not have been more utterly annihilated. He saw red stars whirl before his eyes; he staggered, and finally dropped down upon a velvet bench by the side of the large cage of monkeys. These animals, excited by the crowd, hung in clusters from the bars—some by their tails, others by their strange little hands with long thumbs—and, curious, scared, they made their funniest apish grimaces to the stout Nabob, who, stupefied, his eyes fixed on the flags, repeated aloud to himself:

'I am done for. I am ruined.'

The Duke was dying. He had been taken

suddenly ill on Sunday, as he was returning from the Bois. He had felt an intolerable burning pain through all his body, as if molten iron had been poured into his veins. This was followed by a lethargic cold and fitful slumbers. Jenkins, instantly summoned, did not say much, but ordered mild opiates. The next day the pain became more severe, and was followed by the same icy numbness, of a more decided character than that of the preceding day. It was as if life was departing in violent shocks. Nobody around him seemed uneasy as yet. 'The consequence of St. James,' they whispered in the ante-room, and Jenkins' handsome face retained its serenity. In his morning round he had mentioned the Duke's indisposition to two or three persons, and that so lightly, that no one had attached any importance to it.

Mora himself, in spite of his extreme weakness, and though he had a feeling of emptiness in his head—'Not an idea under his skull,' as he expressed it—was far from suspecting how dangerously ill he was. But on the morning

of the third day, when he awoke, the sight of a little fillet of blood, which had run from his mouth on to his beard and stained the pillow, startled that refined and elegant worldling. All human miseries inspired him with a sense of horror; and now he saw disease creeping on with its stains, its helplessness, and self-neglect, as a first tribute paid to death. Monpavon, coming in behind Jenkins, saw the troubled look of the *grand seigneur* brought face to face with the terrible reality, and himself felt frightened at the ravages made within a few hours on the emaciated face of Mora. All the wrinkles of old age had suddenly made their appearance, and mixed, with the lines of suffering, those depressions, due to the relaxation of the muscles, which show grave inward lesions. Monpavon took Jenkins aside, while the attendants placed on the patient's bed the objects necessary for his toilet—a whole set of crystal and silver things, the brilliancy of which contrasted with the pale yellow skin of the Duke.

'Look here, Jenkins; the Duke must be very ill.'

'I am afraid he is,' whispered the Irishman.

'Well, but what is the matter with him?'

'The matter is, by Jove!' said the other with a sort of rage, 'that he has got what he was seeking for. A man of his age cannot act the part of the young with impunity. That passion of his will cost him dear.'

He silenced immediately the wicked thought which was mastering him, transformed himself so as to give his face an expression of sympathy, and, taking the hands of the old gentleman, he said, sighing deeply:

'Poor Duke, poor Duke! Ah, my friend, I feel deeply for him!'

'Take care, Jenkins,' said Monpavon coldly, in withdrawing his hands, 'you are assuming a terrible responsibility. What—Duke so bad as that—ps—ps—ps—see nobody—consult no one——'

The Irishman raised his arms, as if to say: 'What's the use?'

Monpavon insisted: 'They must send for Brisset, Jousselin, Bouchereau, all the greatest doctors.'

'But you will frighten him?'

Monpavon drew himself up and expanded his chest, the only pride of the old foundered steed:

'My dear fellow, you should have seen Mora and me in the trenches before Constantine—ps—ps—never blinked.—Don't know fear.—Summon your colleagues. I will prepare him.'

The consultation took place that evening, and was kept secret, because the Duke felt a strange repugnance to acknowledge his illness, his sufferings, which deprived him of his prestige, and reduced him to the level of other men. Like those African kings who hide themselves to die in the recesses of their houses, he would have liked to pass away rapt, transfigured, and taken up among the gods. Above all, he dreaded all show of pity, condolence,

and emotion, which he knew would surround his bed; he dreaded the tears which he thought insincere, but which, if sincere, displeased him still more, because of the disfiguring grimaces which accompany them.

He had always hated scenes and outbursts of feeling, everything in short which might affect him and disturb the even tenor of his life. This was well-known to those around him; and there were strict orders to keep out of his sight all the distress, all the desperate calls which from one end of France to the other were directed to Mora, as to one of those houses of refuge kept lighted at night in the woods, and where wanderers may knock.

It is not that he was hard to the unfortunate. He might possibly feel too accessible to pity, which he looked upon as a weakness unworthy of the strong; and, denying it to others, he dreaded it for himself, lest it should shake his courage.

Nobody in the palace, except Monpavon

and Louis, his valet, knew therefore the errand of those three personages, mysteriously ushered into the room of the Minister of State. Even the Duchess was kept in ignorance. Separated from her husband by all the barriers which political and fashionable life interposes between husband and wife in those exceptional marriages, she thought he was only slightly indisposed—his illness probably imaginary—and so little did she suspect a catastrophe, that, at the very hour when the doctors were coming up the broad, dimly-lighted staircase, her apartments, at the other end of the palace, were being lit up for a young girls' dance, one of those *bals blancs* which ingenious and idle Paris was bringing into fashion.

The consultation was what consultations always are, solemn and dismal. Doctors no longer wear big wigs, as in Molière's time, but they still put on the gravity of priests of Isis, of astrologers, bristling up with cabalistic formulas and shakes of the head, which, to be

absolutely comical, only require the peaked hats of former days. The scene here borrowed from its surroundings an imposing aspect. In the large room, transformed, and, so to speak, made larger still, by the silent helplessness of its master, those grave figures approached the bed where the gathered light fell, among the white linen and the purple curtains, on a deeply-furrowed face, ghastly from the lips to the eyes, but wearing a look of serenity, like a veil, or rather, like a shroud. The doctors spoke low, exchanged a rapid look, a barbarous word, but remained motionless, not even knitting their brows. But this mute, reticent expression, which is common to the physician and the judge, this solemnity, behind which science and justice conceal their weakness or their ignorance, had no power to affect the Duke.

Sitting upon his bed, he continued to talk quietly, his eyes slightly uplifted, as if thought was preparing to escape. Monpavon answered him quietly, subduing his own emotion, and

taking from his friend a last lesson in *tenue*. To complete the picture, Louis, in the background, was leaning against the door which led into the Duchess's apartments, like the spectre of that mute domesticity for whom perfect indifference is a duty.

Jenkins was the most excited, the most feverish of those present. Full of obsequiousness towards his 'illustrious colleagues,' as he called them with pouting lips, he prowled about them, and tried to be one with them; but his colleagues kept him at a distance, hardly answered him, or, if they did, answered haughtily, as Fagon, Louis XIV.'s Fagon, would have answered some quack who might have been called to the royal bedside. Old Bouchereau, chiefly, looked askance at the inventor of the pearls. At last, when they had examined and questioned their patient to their satisfaction, they retired, to discuss the case among themselves, to a little lacquered room, with shiny coloured walls and ceilings, full of pretty trifles,

the futility of which bore a strange contrast with the importance of the debate.

Solemn moment! Fancy the racking anguish of a prisoner awaiting the decision of his judges —life or death—reprieve or pardon!

With his long white hand, Mora kept stroking his moustache, a knack which was familiar to him; talked with Monpavon, of the club, the *Variétés*, the crush-room; inquired about the Chamber, the Nabob's election proceedings—all this quietly, without the least affectation. Then, probably tired, or perhaps fearing lest his look—ever wandering towards the hanging from behind which the verdict of fate would presently come forth—should betray the emotion which must needs be in the depths of his consciousness, he leant his head back, closed his eyes, and did not open them again until the doctors' return. They returned with the same cold, stony faces, the faces of judges on whose lips trembles the fate of men—a fate which a Court of Law may pronounce fearlessly, but

which physicians elude and express by a periphrase, perhaps because it is a sneer on their science.

'Well, gentlemen, what says the Faculty?' asked the sick man.

Stammering a few words of lying encouragement and meaningless advice, the three doctors hastened to depart, in order to escape the responsibility of that disaster. Monpavon rushed out after them. Jenkins remained near the bed, overwhelmed with the cruel truths he had heard during the consultation. In vain had he laid his hand upon his heart and quoted his famous motto; Bouchereau had not spared him. Mora was not the first of Jenkins' clients whom he saw thus carried off suddenly, and he hoped that the Duke's death would be a salutary lesson to people of fashion.

The Duke saw at once that neither Jenkins nor Louis would tell him the truth about the consultation. He did not insist; he even affected to share their belief that he was better. But

when Monpavon came back, he called him to his bedside, and reading the falsehood written behind the paint on that old face, he said :

'No nonsense, you know. Between you and me, the truth ! What do they say ? I am far gone, am I not ?'

Monpavon prefaced his answer by a significant pause. Then, brutally, cynically, lest his own emotion should cause him to break down :

'It's all up with you, my poor Auguste !'

The Duke bore this without wincing. He merely exclaimed :

'Ah !'

With a mechanical gesture, he curled the end of his moustache, but his features betrayed no trace of terror. He made up his mind at once.

We can easily understand that the poor wretch who dies in the hospital, homeless, friendless, nameless save for the number of his bed, should accept death as a deliverance, or suffer it as a last trial ; that the old peasant

doubled up with aches, his health broken down, and his joints stiffened, should leave his dark smoky hole without regret, nay, should even long to lie down in the ground which he has so often turned and turned again. And yet, how many are there—even among those—whom their very wretchedness attaches to life, who cling to their sordid rags and wretched furniture, who, dying, cry out, 'I will not die,' and pass away, their nails broken, their fingers bleeding, from this last struggle of life!

Here was nothing like this.

He possessed everything, and was losing all! Conceive the magnitude of the fall!

In the silence of that first terrible minute—the sound of the dance-music, played in the Duchess's apartment at the other end of the palace, faintly heard in the distance—all that made that man's life dear to him, power, honours, fortune, all that splendour, must have seemed to him already receding in the distant irrevocable past. That man must have been

endowed with extraordinary pluck to have borne such a shock so calmly, when nothing appealed to his vanity. There were present his friend, the Doctor, and his valet—only three persons, for whom there were no secrets. The lights had been removed, the bed was in the dark, and the dying man might have turned to the wall and sorrowed over himself without being seen. He did not do so. He did not show one moment of weakness, nor did he make useless appeals. Without breaking one twig of the chestnut trees in the garden, without withering one flower in the grand staircase of the palace, Death had, with stealthy steps, glided along the thickly carpeted apartments, had opened the door, and beckoned to this mighty lord: 'Come on!' He simply answered: 'Ready!'—the true exit of a man of the world, unforeseen, swift, silent.

A man of the world! Mora was nothing else. Going through life with a mask, gloves, and a breast-plate, but that breast-plate the

white satin plastron of a fencing-master ready for an assault of arms, keeping his armour immaculate and pure, and sacrificing everything to preserve the brilliancy of its polished surface, he had suddenly become a statesman in passing from a drawing-room to a grander stage. Indeed his statesmanship was of the highest order, and due entirely to his social qualities, the art of listening and smiling, his knowledge of men, his scepticism and imperturbable calm. That calm did not desert him at this supreme moment.

Aware of the short time left him—for the ghastly visitor was in a hurry, and Mora felt the cold draught from the door which He had left open—he directed all his attention to the fulfilment of duties which devolved on such a death as his, when no devotion should be left unrewarded, and no friendship exposed to malignancy. He gave a list of the persons he wished to see, who were at once sent for, and also summoned the under-secretary. When Jenkins

expressed his opinion that he was fatiguing himself too much:

'Can you guarantee that I shall be alive to-morrow?' said he. 'I have strength to spare just now; let me profit by it.'

Louis inquired whether the Duchess should be apprised of the state of things. Before giving an answer, the Duke listened one moment to the sound of the music, which escaped from the ball-room through the open windows, and was wafted to his bed-room on the wings of night—then he said:

'Wait a while. I have something to do yet.'

He ordered the little lacquer table to be brought near his bed, and began with his own hand the work of selecting what letters should be destroyed. But, feeling his strength give way, he called Monpavon:

'Burn everything,' said he, feebly.

Monpavon approached the chimney, where the flame rose straight in spite of the fine weather.

'Not here,' said he again. 'There are too many. Some one might come.'

Monpavon took up the light desk, and beckoned to the valet to light him, but Jenkins hastened forward:

'Stay, Louis; the Duke might want you.'

He took up the lamp, and they went cautiously along the corridor, looking into all the rooms and galleries; but everywhere the fireplaces were filled with artificial flowers, without any trace of fire. Thus they wandered, like spectres, in the silent darkness of the immense mansion—the only sign of life coming from the right, where pleasure was warbling its notes of merriness, like a bird on a roof about to fall in.

'There is no fire anywhere. What shall we do with all this?' they asked each other, greatly embarrassed.

They looked like two burglars making off with a chest which they cannot force open. At last Monpavon, who was growing impatient,

walked straight up to a door, the only one they had not yet opened:

'This place will do; since we cannot burn them, we will drown them. Light me here, Jenkins.'

They went in.

Where were they? Only Saint-Simon, relating the breaking up of one of those royal existences, when all ceremonies, dignities, and grandeurs are scattered to the winds by the stroke of death—of sudden death—only Saint-Simon, I say, would have dared to tell you. With his delicate and elegant hands, the Marquis pumped on. The other handed to him the tattered letters—bundles of them—some on cream-laid paper, some on tinted paper, on scented paper, with initials, with coronets, with mottoes on streamers, covered with close fine writing, some snappish, others wheedling and alluring. And all those light notes whirled round after each other in streams of water, crumpled, stained, their loving words smeared and defaced even

before they were swallowed up into the gurgling drain, and carried away into the unclean sewer.

There were love-letters of all kinds, from the adventuress's note: '*I saw you pass in the Bois yesterday, Monsieur le Duc,*' to the high-bred taunts of the last-but-one aristocratic mistress, and the moans of the forsaken ones, and the page still glowing with lately whispered love. Monpavon knew all those mysteries, could give a name to each: 'This one is from Madame Moor'—'By Jove! Madame d'Athis!' Coronets and initials; love born from caprice; enduring affection, the offspring of habit—all that, washed promiscuously away, engulfed in the horrid flues, by the light of a lamp, with the noise of rushing water, and going to oblivion by the path of shame.

Suddenly Jenkins stopped in his work of destruction. Two grey-tinted, silky notes were quivering under his fingers.

'Whose is this?' asked Monpavon, on seeing the unknown writing and the confusion

of the Irishman. 'Come, come, Doctor! if you read all, we shall never have done.'

Jenkins, his face glowing, his two letters in his hand, was strongly tempted to carry them away, in order that he might gloat on them at leisure, and torture himself at his ease with the perusal of them—perhaps also to use them as a weapon against the imprudent woman who had signed them. But the stern bearing of the Marquis awed him. He wished to call his attention away, to get rid of him for a minute. The sought-for opportunity offered itself spontaneously. Lost amongst all those papers, a little note, written with a trembling and senile hand, attracted the attention of the quack, who said naïvely: 'This one does not look like a love-letter:

'"*Mon Duc, help me, for God's sake. I am drowning. The Court of Accounts has again inquired into my affairs.*"'

'What are you reading there?' said Monpavon hurriedly, snatching the letter from his

hands. And suddenly, thanks to Mora's neglect to destroy such confidential appeals, the terrible situation in which his protector's death would leave him, flashed through his mind. In his sorrow, he had not thought of it. But now it struck him that the Duke, amidst the preparations for his final exit, might possibly forget him; therefore, leaving Jenkins to finish alone the work of drowning Don Juan's casket of love-notes, he hurried back to the Duke's bed-chamber. As he was about to step in, the noise of a discussion stopped him behind the hanging. It was the voice of Louis, tearful like that of a mendicant on a church porch, trying to inspire his master with pity for his position, and begging leave to take a few rolls of louis d'or which were in a drawer. Oh! the hoarse, exhausted, hardly intelligible answer of the dying man, in which was felt his effort to turn in his bed, and detach his eyes from the distant horizon, of which he was already catching a glimpse!

'Yes, yes, take all. But, for God's sake, let me sleep!—let me sleep!'

Then a noise of opening and shutting drawers, a panting, short breath—and Monpavon retraced his steps, without hearing more. The cruel, ferocious greed of that valet had alarmed his pride. Anything rather than lower himself to that level!

That sleep, for which Mora was so eager, or rather that lethargy, lasted the whole night and the following morning, with occasional moments of consciousness and terrible pains, which were each time relieved by opiates. They had ceased to struggle with the disease, and only sought to alleviate the agony of his last moments, to make him slide gently down the terrible incline. His eyes were again open, but dim, staring at floating shadows and vague forms, such as a plunger sees flitting in the flowing water.

On the Thursday afternoon, he quite woke up, and recognising Monpavon, Cardailhac, and two or three intimate friends, he smiled, and

with one word betrayed his only preoccupation.

'"'What do they say of all this in Paris?'

Indeed, many things were said, diverse and contradictory; but of this be sure, they spoke of him only. The rumour spread from early morning through the town that Mora was dangerously ill. In the streets, the fashionable resorts, the cafés, the workshops, there reigned great excitement. In the newspaper-offices, in the clubs, and even in the porters' boxes and on the tops of omnibuses, everywhere in fact where the morning papers were read, this startling news, and the commentaries with which it was accompanied, made people discuss the event and examine it in its political bearings.

Mora was the most brilliant incarnation of the Empire. The most evident part of an edifice is not its foundations, be they solid or tottering, nor is it its architectural mass, but its fine gilt spire, a network of embroidery, superadded to the rest for the gratification of sight. So the most evident

part of the Empire, in France and abroad, was Mora. He gone, the edifice was discrowned of all its elegance, marked by a long irremediable rent. And what a number of existences would be dragged down in this sudden fall, what fortunes would be shaken to their very basis by the rebound of this calamity! None, however, so utterly as that of the stout man sitting downstairs, motionless and silent, on the bench next to the cage of monkeys.

For the Nabob, Mora's death was his own death, his ruin, the end of all things. He felt it so well that, on learning the Duke's desperate condition, he had expressed no pity, had put on no grimaces of any sort, but had merely uttered those cold and cruel words, the expression of his human egotism: 'I am done for!' Those words escaped from his lips again and again, each time his situation appeared to him in all its horrible reality—like rapid visions—as happens in those mountain storms, when a sudden flash of lightning makes the abyss visible to its

very depths, showing its projecting points and edges, ready to tear you to tatters in the downward fall.

The clear, rapid insight which accompanies great disasters did not spare him any details. He saw himself almost certainly ousted from the Chamber, Mora not being there to take up his cause; then the consequences of his disgrace—bankruptcy, misery, and even worse; for when those enormous fortunes crumble down, they always carry with them, among the rubbish, a little of a man's honour. And what brambles and thorns, what scratches and ghastly wounds, before he reached the bottom of the abyss in his downfall! In a week Schwalbach's bills would come to maturity—eight hundred thousand francs to pay—then Moëssard's damage, for the fellow demanded one hundred thousand francs, and threatened, in case of refusal, to apply to the Chamber for leave to sue him before the police-court; a still more disgraceful action, brought by the families of two little Bethlehem

martyrs against the founders of that charity; and over and above all this, the complicated state of matters at the *Caisse Territoriale*! One hope only remained, the step Paul de Géry was about to take in going over to Tunis; but it was vague, fanciful, and distant.

'Ah! I am done for, I am lost!'

In the immense hall nobody noticed his trouble. The crowd of senators, *députés*, councillors of state, men of high position in the Government, walked about, or stood talking mysteriously, their elbows on the two marble chimney-pieces which were at the two opposite ends of the apartment. But among them all there was not one who took notice of the poor Nabob. There were so many disappointed ambitions, so many projects dashed to the ground, gathered here, in this visit *in extremis*, that personal uneasiness drove away any other feeling.

The faces, strange to say, expressed neither pity nor grief, but rather a sort of rage. All

these people seemed to resent the Duke's death as treachery against themselves. Such phrases as this were heard: 'Why did he lead such a wild life?' and through the high windows, those angry gentlemen pointed, among the carriages in the court-yard, to a little brougham, from the window of which passed a lace sleeve, and a neatly-gloved hand, holding a card, turned down at the corner, to the footman who brought the bulletin of the day.

From time to time one of the familiar friends of this palace, one of those whom the dying man had sent for, would appear in this crowd, give an order, and disappear, leaving the frightened expression of his face reflected on twenty others. Jenkins showed himself for one moment, his tie undone, his waistcoat opened, his cuffs crumpled, in the disordered dress of one who had waged war upstairs with the inexorable foe. He found himself at once surrounded and pressed with questions. The monkeys, who were flattening their snub noses

against the bars of their cage, excited by the unusual tumult, and very attentive to what was going on before them, as if they were studying human grimaces, had a magnificent model in the Irish Doctor. His grief was splendid; it was a fine, strong, manly grief, which set his lips firmly, and made his chest heave:

'The death agony has commenced,' said he, with a mournful voice; 'it is now a mere question of hours.'

And as Jansoulet approached him, he addressed him theatrically:

'Ah, my friend, what a man! what courage! He forgot nobody. He was just now speaking of you.'

'Indeed!'

'"That poor Nabob," said he, "how is he getting on with his election?"'

That was all. The Duke had said nothing more.

Jansoulet bent his head. What else could he hope for? Was it not enough that at such

a time, such a man as Mora had even thought of him? He returned to his bench, where he sat down helpless, after having been galvanised by one minute of deceitful hope, assisted unconsciously at the almost complete desertion of the vast hall, and only perceived that he was the only and last visitor left, when he heard the rabble of servants talking aloud in the dusk:

'I have had enough of it—I leave service for ever.'

'As for me, I'll stay with the Duchess.'

And those plans, those decisions, taken a few hours before Mora's death, were a more certain condemnation than that pronounced by the faculty.

The Nabob understood that it was time for him to retire; but before doing so, he wished to write down his name on the porter's book. He, therefore, approached the table, and bent down, the better to see what he was doing. The page was full. They showed him a blank

place below a little thready handwriting, like that traced by fat fingers; and only when he had signed, did he perceive that the name of Hemerlingue was the one written above his own, crushing it, so to speak, and twining around it with an insidious flourish. Superstitious, like a true Latin as he was, this struck him like an evil omen, and he left the place carrying terror in his heart.

Where should he dine? At his club? At the Place Vendôme? To hear speak again of that death which haunted him? He chose to go aimlessly, straight before him, as do men possessed by a fixed idea which they hope to shake off in the activity of motion. The evening was warm and perfumed. He went straight along the quays, until he reached the trees of the Cours-la-Reine, and then retraced his steps through the freshly-watered avenue, full of that fine dust which characterises the beautiful evenings in Paris. Here and there, branched chandeliers were lighted up for the night con-

certs, and jets of burning gas started from among the foliage. The noise of glasses and plates in a restaurant gave him the idea of dining there.

In spite of all he had gone through, the robust man felt hungry. They served him under a glass verandah, lined with green foliage, which faced that great portico of the *Palais de l'Industrie*, where the Duke had saluted him a *député* in the presence of a thousand persons. The refined aristocratic face rose up before him in the darkness of the arch, and he saw him also as he lay yonder, in his room, propped up on white dismal cushions. Suddenly, on looking at the bill of fare which the waiter gave him, he was astounded to see that it was dated the twentieth of May. Not one month had passed since the opening of the Exhibition! He felt as if he had grown ten years older. By degrees, however, the warmth induced by the meal comforted his heart. In the passage the waiters were talking:

'Any news from Mora? They say he is very ill.'

'Nonsense! He is sure to come round. Those fellows have always such luck.'

Hope is so strongly anchored in the human heart that, in spite of all Jansoulet had seen and heard, these few words, helped by a couple of bottles of Burgundy and a few glasses of Cognac, sufficed to rekindle his courage. After all, many had been as low, and recovered again! Doctors will often exaggerate an illness for the sake of the repute into which the cure brings them! 'I will go and see,' said he to himself. He returned to Mora's residence, his heart full of hopes, trusting to that chance which had so often stood his friend. The sight of the princely dwelling was really calculated to strengthen his hope. It had the same reassuring and peaceful look which it always wore in the evening —from the avenue lighted at intervals, majestic and lonely, to the porch, at the foot of which stood, waiting, a large coach of an antique form.

In the ante-room, peaceful also, two enormous lamps were burning. A footman lay sleeping in one corner, and the porter stood near the chimney, reading. He looked at the new-comer over his spectacles, but did not speak, and Jansoulet did not dare to ask questions. Piles of newspapers lying upon the table, with their wrappers inscribed with the Duke's name, seemed to have been thrown there as useless. The Nabob opened one, and tried to read; but a quick gliding step and a rhythmic whispered chant made him raise his eyes. He saw a bent white-haired old man, adorned with point-lace like an altar, murmuring a prayer as he went away, his long red cassock trailing behind him on the carpet. It was the Archbishop of Paris with his two assistants. The vision brushed past Jansoulet with the murmuring sound of a chilly breeze, entered into the great coach, and disappeared, carrying with it his last hope.

'Question of propriety, dear fellow,' said

Monpavon, suddenly appearing before him. 'Mora is an Epicurean, brought up in the ideas of—thingabob—what's his name—you know. Eighteenth century—but very bad for the masses. A man of his position—ps—ps—ps Oh! he was our master—ps—ps—a man of irreproachable *tenue*, he!'

'It is all over, then?' said Jansoulet overwhelmed. 'All hopes gone!'

Monpavon beckoned to him to listen. They heard the rumbling of a carriage in the Avenue of the Quay. The signal-bell gave several consecutive strokes. The Marquis counted aloud: 'One, two, three, four.' At the fifth he rose:

'No hopes now, here comes the other,' said he, alluding to the Parisian superstition which would have it that the visit of the Sovereign was always fatal to the dying. Footmen hurried about, opened the folding doors, fell into line, whilst the Swiss, his hat cocked on his head, struck the flags with his halberd, to announce

the passage of two august shadows. Jansoulet caught a glimpse of them behind the liveried servants, and he perceived them, through a long vista of open doors, ascending the grand staircase, preceded by a footman who carried a candelabrum. The woman went up straight and proud, wrapped up in her black Spanish mantilla. The man, who wore a light overcoat, the collar turned up, walked slowly, wearily, supporting himself on the baluster, and his arched shoulders shaking with convulsive sobs.

'Let us go, Nabob. Nothing more to do here,' said the old beau, taking Jansoulet by the arm, and leading him out.

He stopped on the threshold, raised his hand, waved, with his gloved fingers, a farewell in the direction of his dying friend. 'Good-bye, dear boy!' The motion and the tone were worldly and correct enough; but his voice was a little tremulous.

The club of the Rue Royale is renowned

for high gambling, but seldom was there seen anything so terrible as the game played that night. It began at eleven and was not over at five o'clock the next morning. Enormous sums rolled upon the green cloth, and changed hands; were heaped together, scattered about, and collected again. Whole fortunes were swallowed up in this monstrous game, which the Nabob had commenced to drown his terrors in the emotions of gambling. At last, after strange alternatives and caprices of fortune, which would have made the hair of a tyro grow white, the Nabob left, having cleared five hundred thousand francs.—They said five millions, on the boulevard the next day, and called it scandalous.—The *Messager* had a long article which filled three-quarters of its columns, in which it inveighed against certain adventurers, tolerated in the clubs, and who bring ruin into the bosom of the most honourable families.

Alas! Jansoulet's gain barely sufficed to meet Schwalbach's first bills.

Whilst this mad play was going on, of which Mora was the involuntary cause, and, so to speak, the soul, his name was not once pronounced. Neither Cardaillhac nor Jenkins appeared. Monpavon had gone to bed, more deeply affected than he wished to confess. No news had reached the club.

'Is he dead?' asked Jansoulet of himself as he left the club; and he felt anxious to go and see before returning home. He was no longer impelled by hope, but by that morbid, nervous curiosity which, after a great fire, brings back the unfortunate victims, ruined and homeless, to visit again the wrecks of their dwellings.

Although it was very early still, and a rosy mist floated in the atmosphere, Mora's mansion was wide open as if for a solemn departure. The lamps were still burning on the mantelpieces, and the hall was full of dust. The Nabob penetrated into this inexplicable loneliness until he reached the first story. There, at

last, he heard Cardailhac's voice dictating names, and the scratching of pens upon paper. The clever manager of the festivities in honour of the Bey was now superintending with the same zeal the obsequies of the Duke-de Mora. No time had been lost. His Grace had died in the course of the evening, and, early in the morning, ten thousand letters were already being printed, and all who could write in the house were busy with the directions. Without crossing those improvised offices, Jansoulet reached the first drawing-room, usually so full of people, but now quite empty. In the middle of the apartment lay, on the table, the Duke's hat, cane, and gloves, always ready in case the master should suddenly wish to go out, so as to spare him the trouble of giving an order. The things we wear retain the impress of our individualities—the curve of the hat called to mind the twist of the moustache, the light gloves were ready to handle the supple yet strong Chinese cane; in short, life was still

quivering everywhere, as if the Duke had but to appear, stretch his hand whilst talking, take these various objects, and go out for his stroll.

But no, the Duke would not stroll out. Jansoulet had but to approach the bedroom door, left ajar, to see, on a bed raised upon an estrade three steps high—for the estrade was still there, even after death—Mora's rigid and haughty figure, his lifeless profile grown old and transformed by the grey beard which had grown in one night.

At the bedside, on the steps, buried in the white draperies of the bed, knelt a woman whose fair hair hung dishevelled all around her, ready to fall under the scissors of eternal widowhood. By her side, deep in thoughtful meditation, knelt a priest and a sister of mercy, whom a sleepless night, the darkness and prayer of this ghastly watch, had overcome with fatigue.

This room, where so many ambitious plans had been conceived, where so many hopes had

risen, so many disappointments been felt, was now hushed in the silence of death. Not a sound, not a sigh! Only, in spite of the early hour, yonder, towards the Pont de la Concorde, the quick, shrill tones of a clarionet were heard above the rumbling of the first vehicles; but its taunting irony was henceforth powerless to annoy him who reposed here, and who appeared, to the terrified Nabob, like a symbol of his own destiny—stiffened, cold, livid, and ready for the grave.

A little later in the day, others than Jansoulet saw the death-chamber wearing a still more lugubrious aspect: the windows wide open, the wind blowing freely from the garden, a human form upon a table—the body just embalmed—the head scooped out and filled with a sponge, the brain in a bucket. The weight of that statesman's brain was truly wonderful. It weighed——how much did it weigh? The papers of the day informed their readers, but who remembers it now?

CHAPTER II.

THE FUNERAL.

'Do not weep, Fairy; you deprive me of all my courage. Come, dear, you will be happier when you have not your frightful demon with you. You will return to Fontainebleau and mind your hens. Brahim's ten thousand francs will suffice for the first outlays. And don't you fear; when I am there, I shall send you some money. Since the Bey wishes to have my sculpture, he will have to pay for his whistle. I shall return rich, very rich. Who knows? Perhaps a sultana!'

'Yes, you will be a sultana, but I—I shall be dead—shall see you no more.'

And the good Crenmitz sank into a corner of the cab to hide her tears from the passers-by.

Felicia was leaving Paris. She was endeavouring to escape from the horrible sadness, the gloomy despair, into which Mora's death had plunged her. What a terrible shock this had been for the proud girl! A feeling of weariness and spite had thrown her into that man's arms; pride, modesty, she had sacrificed all to him; and now, he carried all that away with him, leaving her withered for life, a tearless, undignified widow who dared not mourn. Two or three visits to Saint-James', a few evenings passed together, hidden in the box of a theatre, were the only souvenirs of this *liaison*, which had lasted two weeks at most—a sin without love, which did not even bring satisfaction to her pride by a splendid scandal—a useless and ineffaceable stain—the stupid fall into the mire of a woman who knows not how to walk, and who, when she is once on the ground, fears to rise again, lest she should provoke the ironical pity of lookers-on.

One moment she meditated suicide; but she

paused before the idea that it would surely be attributed to the despair of love. She saw beforehand the sentimental pity of society; the stupidity of her supposed passion for a man who, like the Duke, had had such innumerable love intrigues; and the violets which the chubby Moëssards of the press would strew upon her grave, dug so soon after that of Mora. One resource was left her, travelling. Yes, she would go to countries so distant that her very thoughts might undergo a change. Unfortunately she had no money. Then she remembered that, the day following her great success at the Exhibition, old Brahim Bey had paid her a visit, and made her, in his master's name, magnificent offers to induce her to go to Tunis, and undertake some great work for the Bey. At that time she had refused, not at all tempted by fabulous prices, a splendid hospitality, and the finest court of the Bardo, with its lace-work piazza, for her studio. But now she was ready to accept the invitation. She had only

to say the word, and the bargain was struck at once. A few letters were exchanged on that subject, after which, she hurriedly made her preparations, locked her house, and took her way to the station, as if for a week's holiday, astonished at her own quick decision—her artistic and adventurous nature being flattered by the hope of a new life under unknown skies.

The Bey's yacht was to receive her on board at Genoa. And now, as she sat in the cab which drove her to the station, closing her eyes and musing, she saw beforehand the white stones of an Italian sea-port, the splendid sea, the almost Oriental sun—a region where everything spoke of joy and happiness, even the swollen sail seen upon the background of a blue sky. As it happened, on that day Paris was muddy, uniformly grey, deluged by an unceasing rain which seems made for the big town alone, a rain which rises like a cloud out of its river, its smoke, and its monstrous breath, and falls down again in streams from its roofs, its gut-

ters, and its innumerable attic windows. Felicia longed to escape from that sad Paris; and, in her feverish impatience, she was angry with the coachman who did not drive quickly enough, with the two slow cab-horses, and with the inexplicable crowd of carriages and omnibuses, which blocked up the way near the Pont de la Concorde.

'Go on, coachman; why don't you go on?'

'It is impossible, madam. It is the funeral.'

She looked out, but immediately withdrew her head in great terror. She saw a line of soldiers walking with reversed guns, a confused mass of helmets, of hats raised on the passage of a long procession. It was Mora's funeral which was going past.

'Don't stay there. Go round,' cried she to the coachman.

The cab turned slowly round, tearing itself regretfully away from that splendid spectacle which Paris had awaited for the last four days,

went back by the Avenue, took the Rue Montaigne, going at a dismally slow pace, and at last reached the Madeleine by the Boulevard Malesherbes. The lock was here thicker, more compact than before. A drizzling rain was falling; the stained glass of the church window reflected the light of the interior, and the very form of the Grecian temple disappeared under enormous black draperies. The deep chant of the office for the dead filled the square, whilst the greater part of the procession, filling the Rue Royale as far as the bridges, seemed to connect the dead, by a black line of moving men and carriages, with the gate of the Corps Législatif, which Mora had crossed so often. Beyond the Madeleine, the causeway of the Boulevards stretched away, broad and empty, between two lines of soldiers, standing at rest and restraining the swarming crowd of curious to the footpaths, whilst the balconies overflowed, in spite of the rain, with people bending forward to look in the direction of the church.

It was just such a scene as you witness on the passage of the *Bœuf Gras*, or the return home of a victorious army; for Paris, so fond of spectacles, enjoys them all with the same zest, whether it be a civil war, or the funeral of a statesman.

The cab had to retrace its road and make another turn; and it is easy to imagine the bad humour of the coachman and his horses, all three Parisians to the backbone, and therefore furious at being deprived of such a fine spectacle. Then began, through the deserted and silent streets—all the life of Paris flowing in the great artery of the Boulevard—a capricious and disordered drive, the senseless tramp of a cab engaged by the hour, turning up at the lower extremity of the Faubourg Saint-Denis, the Faubourg Saint-Martin, coming back to the centre, and always finding, after each circuit, each stratagem, the same lurking obstacle, the same crowdy gathering, some fragment of the black line seen in the opening of a street,

slowly unrolling itself under the rain, with the sound of the muffled drums—a dull heavy thump, like that of earth falling into a hole.

What tortures, these, for Felicia! It was her shame and her remorse which crossed Paris in this solemn funeral pomp, this public mourning, reflected even by the clouds. The proud girl rebelled against this insult which circumstances offered her. She tried to escape from it in the corner of the cab, where she had sunk, her eyes closed, helpless. Old Crenmitz, attributing her nervousness and dejection to her sorrow, tried to console her, wept over their separation, hid herself also, and left all the door of the cab to the big Algerian *sloogui*, which put his fine head out and sniffed at the wind, his two paws proudly planted on the ledge, with heraldic stiffness.

After a thousand endless windings, the cab stopped suddenly, moved on again amidst shouts and abuse, was jostled, raised till the luggage on its roof was nearly overturned, and

finally came to a standstill, and assumed the perfect repose of a ship riding at anchor.

'Good heavens! what a crowd!' murmured the terrified Crenmitz.

Felicia shook off her torpor.

'Where are we?' she asked.

Under a colourless, smoky sky, streaked by the rain which fell in long thin fillets, and gave to objects the appearance of being covered over with a fine gauze, there stretched out a large square, filled with a human sea which had been poured down in streams from all the adjacent streets, and now lay motionless around a high bronze column, overlooking those billows like the gigantic mast of a stranded vessel. Squadrons of horsemen, sword in hand; batteries placed from distance to distance on the border of a free causeway; a whole fierce army, in fact, was waiting for *him* who would soon pass here. It looked as if they meant to seize him, to capture him with violence from the grasp of the formidable foe who was hurry-

ing him away. Alas! all the cavalry charges in the world, all the cannonades, were powerless here. The prisoner was coming, strongly bound up and defended by a triple wall of hard wood, metal, and velvet, inaccessible to grapeshot; and these were not the sort of soldiers from whom he could hope for deliverance.

'Drive on, coachman; I will not stay here,' said Felicia angrily, pulling the coachman by his dripping cloak.

She was seized with senseless terror at the thought of the nightmare which was pursuing her, and of *that* which she heard was approaching with a horrible rumbling noise, distant as yet, but coming nearer and nearer every minute. But at the first movement of the cab, the cries and shouts commenced again. Thinking they would allow him to cross the square, the coachman had, with much labour, penetrated as far as the first row of the crowd; but the ranks had closed behind him and refused to let

him pass. He could neither advance nor retreat. They must, therefore, stay where they were, endure the breath of the people, reeking with alcohol, and their prying looks, kindling beforehand for a glorious spectacle. In the meantime the crowd stared at the fair traveller who was going away with such a quantity of boxes, and a big dog, like the *sloogui*, to protect her. Crenmitz was horribly frightened; but Felicia thought of one thing only, that *he* was coming, and that she would be in the first rank to see him.

Suddenly a great shout arose: 'There he is!' Then a great silence spread over the square—the relief felt after three long hours of expectation.

Yes, he was coming!

Felicia's first impulse was to pull down the blind on her side—the side where the procession was to pass. But on hearing the roll of the drums quite near her, seized with a nervous rage at the thought that it was impossible for

her to escape that obsession, perhaps also excited by the morbid curiosity of the surrounding crowd, she suddenly let down the window, and boldly thrust her pale and defiant little face out, supporting it on her two hands.

'Ah! you want me to look at you—well! here then, I look at you!'

It was the finest thing you could see in the way of funeral, of supreme honours, paid with a pomp as sonorous, as empty, and as vain as the rhythmic accompaniment of the muffled drums. First of all came the white surplices of the clergy, seen in the first five mourning coaches; next came, drawn by six black horses, true horses of Erebus, as black, as slow, as heavy, as the gloomy stream itself, the funeral car, beplumed, befringed, and belaced with silver—heavy silver tears, and silver coronets surmounting gigantic silver M's, fatidic initials which seemed to be those of Death, *MORS*, Duchess Mors, with her coronet and strawberry leaves.

The bulk of the canopy and the massive draperies concealed the vulgar carcass of the hearse, which shook and swung from its base to its summit, as if crushed under the majesty of the dead man. On the coffin, a sword, a coat, and a laced hat—parade trappings which had never been used—glittered with gold and mother-of-pearl in the dark recess, among the hangings and the fresh flowers—emblem of the spring season, in spite of the dullness of the weather. Ten paces behind the funeral car came the servants; after them, in majestic isolation, an officer, in his cloak, bore the Duke's insignia—a medley of all the orders in the world—crosses, multi-coloured ribbons, which hung down from the black velvet silver-fringed cushion.

Next came the master of the ceremonies, walking before the deputation of the Corps Législatif—some twelve *députés* chosen by lot, among whom could be discerned the tall figure of the Nabob, wearing his official costume for

the first time, as if an ironical destiny had wished to give the *député* on trial a foretaste of all parliamentary joys. The deceased's friends followed, forming a small knot, admirably chosen to show the inanity and emptiness of a *grand seigneur's* life—the three-times-bankrupt lessee of a theatre, a picture-dealer grown rich by usury, a gentleman with tarnished reputation, and a few fast livers and men on town, absolutely unknown to fame. All were on foot and bareheaded, with the exception of a few deputies, who had timidly ventured to put on their black-silk skull-caps on approaching the popular quarters.

Then came the carriages.

At the funeral of a warrior, the hero's favourite horse, his charger, follows the car, obliged to regulate, on the slow march of the procession, his fiery motion, which vaguely awakens in the mind ideas of gunpowder and banners streaming in the wind. The large eight-spring coach of Mora, in which he used

to drive to social or political gatherings, took here the place of that companion of victories—its panels hung with black, its lamps covered with long light crape, undulating with feminine gracefulness. These veiled lamps were a new funeral fashion, the supreme style of mourning; and it was worthy of that dandy to give this last lesson of elegance to our Parisians, who flocked to his obsequies as to a Longchamps of the dead.

Three more masters of ceremonies. Then came the solemn official pomp, ever the same, whether it be for a baptism, a marriage, or a funeral, the opening of parliament, or the reception of a sovereign. It was figured by an interminable line of brilliant state carriages, with large windows, showy liveries laced with gold, which passed through the dazzled populace, reminding them of fairy tales and Cinderella's turn-out, and drawing exclamations of wonder, 'Oh's!' which rose and burst in the air like rockets.

In the crowd there was always to be met some chatty policeman, some small, well-informed *bourgeois*, ever on the watch for public ceremonies, who gave the names of the people in the carriages, as they passed, escorted by dragoons, cuirassiers, or *gardes de Paris*.

First of all came the representatives of the Emperor, the Empress, and all the Imperial family; next, in a learnedly elaborate hierarchical order, the least infraction to which might have occasioned grave conflicts, were seen the different 'Powers of the State'—Members of the Privy Council, Marshals, Admirals, the Great Chancellor of the Legion of Honour, the Senate, the Corps Législatif, the Courts of Justice, the University Dons, whose costumes, ermine, and coifs reminded one of old Paris—something pompous, out of date, and out of place, in these sceptical times of blouses and black coats.

To drown her thoughts, Felicia, by a strong effort of her will, followed with her eyes this

enormously long and monotonous procession; but, after a time, she began to feel weary, as if, on some rainy day, she had tried to kill time by turning over the leaves of a scrap book, full of little coloured personages, illustrating the history of official costumes from the most remote period to the present time. All those people passing there, seen in profile, motionless and upright behind the large carriage windows, looked just like illuminated personages, crossing the stage along the foot-lights, so that the spectators might not lose an iota of their gold embroidery, their oak palms, their stripes and braiding—mannikins finely got up to satisfy the curiosity of the crowd, and supporting the public gaze with absolute indifference.

Indifference! That was exactly the character of those obsequies. Indifference was visible everywhere on the faces, as it was felt in the hearts, of all those functionaries—most of whom had known the Duke by sight only—as well as of the private friends and servants who followed

on foot, between the hearse and the Duke's carriage. Indifferent, nay, rather chuckling, was the stout Minister, Vice-President of the Council, who, with the same strong hand with which he used to strike the tribune, now deliberately held one of the front corners of the pall, and seemed to pull it onward, as if he were in greater haste than either the horses or the hearse to lay in its six feet of earth that enemy of twenty years, his eternal rival, the obstacle to all his ambitious schemes. The three other dignitaries did not move on with the same vigorous step; they held their shares of the pall with a loose absent grasp of significant weakness. Indifferent were the priests, and that professionally. Indifferent also the servants, whom he never called by any other name than 'thingabob,' and whom he treated as if they had been mere chattels. Indifferent Monsieur Louis, whose last day of servitude this was; for he had become a freedman, from the slave he was before, and was rich enough to enjoy his

liberty. That cold, icy indifference had penetrated even among the friends, though a few were really attached to Mora; but Cardailhac was too busy attending to the march and order of the ceremony to give way to the least emotion, which in him would, besides, have been unnatural; and old Monpavon, though hit in the heart, would have found the least bend of his shirt-front and of his high stature a great derogation to *tenue*, and quite unworthy of his illustrious friend. His eyes remained as dry and brilliant as ever. Is not the undertaker paid to provide mourning tears—tears of silver embroidered on black cloth? Yet was there one who wept, among the deputation from the Chamber; but he wept naïvely over himself. Poor Nabob! unnerved by the music and pomp, he felt as if he were burying all his fortune, all his aspirations towards dignities and honours. But his grief was only a variety of indifference.

Among the public, the satisfaction felt at

the sight of this beautiful spectacle, the pleasure of turning a week-day into a holiday, overmastered any other feeling. All along the line of boulevards, the spectators, looking on from the balconies, felt rather inclined to clap their hands in approval of the show. Further on, in the artisan quarters, irreverence put on a bolder face; coarse jokes, vulgar puns on the deceased and his love-intrigues, which all Paris knew, roars of laughter provoked by the broad-brimmed hats of the rabbis, the faces of the *prud'hommes*, exploded in the air between two rolls of the drums. Their feet in the mud, dressed in blouses or jerseys, their caps off in obedience to custom, were to be seen men who represented misery, compulsory labour, enforced idleness or strikes, and who stared sneeringly at this last pageant of the brilliant Duke—that inhabitant of another sphere, bereft now of all his honours; and who, probably, had never before visited this part of the town. But, you see, in order to go to yonder cemetery, it

is absolutely necessary to follow the common road, and go along the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, the Rue de la Roquette, and pass through that *octroi* gate so widely opened on the infinite! and, really, to those poor hard-worked fellows, it seems a good thing to see great lords like Mora, Dukes and Ministers, go to their last abode by the same way as common men. That equality in death consoles for many of the inequalities of life; and, to-morrow, the bread will seem cheaper, wine better, work lighter, when the thought strikes them that 'even that old Mora has had to go like any other!'

The procession was still passing onward, less dismal than wearisome. Now came choral societies, deputations from the army, from the navy, officers of all arms, walking like a compact flock before a long row of empty vehicles —mourning carriages, private carriages sent there out of compliment. Troops followed in their turn. All the length of that sordid Faubourg and that long Rue de la Roquette,

already swarming with people as far as the eye could reach, came pouring down a whole army —infantry, dragoons, lancers, carbineers, heavy guns, gaping in the air, ready to roar and shake the pavement and the windows. But they could not succeed in covering the roll of the muffled drums, a dull, sinister sound, which reminded Felicia of the funeral of African grandees— when thousands of slain victims accompany the soul of a prince, so that it may not arrive alone in the spirit-land—and made her imagine that pompous and endless crowd descending and disappearing into a stupendous grave, large enough to swallow them all.

'*—now, and at the hour of our death. Amen!*' murmured Crenmitz, whilst the cab crossed the less crowded square, over which the golden statue of Liberty seemed to take its flight in space; and those words of the old dancer were perhaps the only sincere and heartfelt prayer addressed to heaven on the long road which the funeral had followed.

Three long cold speeches have been made over the grave where the dead man now lies—three official speeches which gave the orators an opportunity to expatiate on their devotedness to the interests of the Dynasty. The guns have fifteen times awakened the numerous echoes of the cemetery, fifteen times sent a quiver through the crowns of jet and *immortelles*—light *ex-votos*, hanging from the angles of tomb railings—and whilst a reddish mist floats and rolls with an odour of powder over the necropolis, and slowly rises with the smoke of steam-works abundant in this plebeian quarter, the innumerable crowd disperse and scatter themselves away by the sloping streets, the high staircases looking all white in the verdure, with a confused murmur, and the noise of water rushing down the rocks. All those men in scarlet and black gowns, in blue and green coats, with gold aiglets, and fine swords which they steady with the hand while walking, hasten to rejoin their carriages. Stately bows

and discreet smiles are exchanged, whilst the mourning coaches sweep down the avenues at a gallop, and show long lines of black coachmen with rounded backs, cocked hats, and cloaks floating in the wind.

The general impression felt was one of relief at being rid of a fatiguing representation, a legitimate longing to strip off the administrative livery, the state uniforms, to unbuckle the sword belts, take off the neck-bands and gorgets, and relax the features which had so long worn a mask.

Short and heavy, painfully dragging his swollen legs, Hemerlingue was hurrying out of the cemetery. He declined all offers of carriages, well knowing that his own could alone contain his enormous bulk.

'Baron, Baron, this way,' they said; 'there is room for you here. Step in.'

'No thanks. I am stiff and I want to walk.'

In order to avoid these offers, which really annoyed him, he took a transverse, almost solitary

avenue—too solitary even, and he soon regretted it. From the moment of his entrance into the cemetery, he had had but one preoccupation, the fear of finding himself face to face with Jansoulet, whose violence he knew, and who was quite capable, forgetting the majesty of the place, to renew in Père-la-Chaise the scandal of the Rue Royale. Two or three times during the ceremony he had seen the head of his former chum emerge from amongst the meaningless types of which the assembly was composed, and look in his direction, evidently with the desire of meeting him. Why had he not taken the great avenue there? He might have had some help in case of misfortune, whereas here——Brrrr—. That was the anxiety which made him step out as much as his short legs and panting chest would allow him; but, alas! in vain. As he was turning round, haunted thus by the fear of being followed, behold! the high and broad shoulders of the Nabob appeared at the entrance of the alley. Impossible for the poor pursy fellow to creep

aside among the tombs which rise so near to one another that there is no room even to kneel down. The wet, clayey soil was slippery and sank under his feet. He therefore walked on with as indifferent an air as he could assume, hoping that the other would not know him. But a husky and powerful voice called out behind him: 'Lazare!'—he was called Lazare, that millionnaire. He did not answer, but tried to join a knot of officers who were walking some distance before him.

'Lazare! ho, Lazare!'

Just as he used to call him in bygone days on the Marseilles quay!

Yielding to an old habit, he was on the point of stopping; but the remembrance of his own infamy, of all the harm which he had done the Nabob, and was still doing him, suddenly rushed through his mind and frightened him horribly. At that moment, he felt an iron gripe on his shoulder; the cold sweat of cowardice stood in large drops on his flabby skin, his face became

still yellower than usual, his eyes blinked at the idea of the formidable blow which he was expecting, and he instinctively raised his two arms to parry the stroke.

'You need not be afraid. I am not going to do you any harm,' said Jansoulet sadly. 'My only object in stopping you is to ask you not to do me any more either.'

He stopped to take breath. The stupefied and frightened banker remained speechless there, his round owl-like eyes wide opened, before that suffocating emotion of his former friend.

'Listen to me, Lazare. You are stronger than I, at this war which we have so long waged against one another. I am down, quite. My shoulders have touched the ground. Spare now your old companion. Be merciful unto me, come, be merciful!'

Everything was palpitating with deep-felt emotion in that *méridional*, unnerved by the sad ceremony at which he had just assisted. Nor was Hemerlingue, facing him there, much more

valiant. The dismal music, the open grave, the speeches, the parting salute of the guns, had brought vividly to his mind the fact of unavoidable death, and shaken him deeply. The voice of his old comrade stirred what was yet left of human in that cask of gelatine.

This was his old chum! It was the first time since their quarrel—ten years ago—that he stood so near him. What a crowd of things did those sunburnt features, those strong shoulders, so out of place in his laced coat, remind him of! He saw again, in a moment, the thin and tattered blanket in which they used to wrap themselves up together on the deck of the *Sinaï*, the meagre ration shared between them like brothers, their wanderings in the parched-up country round Marseilles, when they used to steal big onions in the fields, and eat them seated on the slope of a ditch, their dreams, their schemes, their *sous* put in common; and, when fortune began to smile upon them, the fun they had had together, the delicious little suppers, when they

had no secret for each other, but poured their hearts in each other's bosom, their elbows on the table, like trusty friends.

How can two men quarrel when they know each other so well, when they have lived like twins, suckled by that lean but strong nurse, Misery, when they have shared her soured milk and rough caresses? These thoughts, long to enumerate, crossed Hemerlingue's mind in flashes. Almost instinctively, he dropped his heavy hand into the Nabob's. Some rough animal feeling was stirred in them, stronger than their long grudge; and those two men, who for the last ten years had tried to ruin and dishonour each other, began to talk again with an open heart.

When two friends meet again, it generally happens that, after the first effusion of feeling, they remain dumb, as if they had nothing more to relate; whereas, on the contrary, it is the very abundance of matter, the hurried rush of emotion, which stops their utterance. So it happened with

the two old cronies. Jansoulet tightly pressed the banker's arm, lest, resisting the good impulse which he had moved in him, he should try to escape:

'You are not in a hurry, are you?' asked the Nabob. 'We can walk a little, if you like. The rain has ceased, the weather is fine again. I feel as if I were twenty years younger.'

'Yes, I, too, feel happy,' said Hemerlingue; 'only I cannot walk long; my legs are so heavy.'

'Ah, yes! I forgot—those poor old legs of yours—stop, there is a bench yonder. Let us go and sit down. Lean on my arm, old fellow.'

The Nabob led him, with brotherly attention, to one of those benches placed here and there against the tombs, where those sorrowing ones find rest, who make the cemetery their habitual walk and abode. He helped him to sit down, caressed him with his looks, pitied his infirmity, and naturally, by an easy transition, considering the place where they were, they came to talk of their health, of age, which was creeping

on. The one was dropsical, the other apoplectic. They both took Jenkins' pearls, a dangerous remedy, as witness Mora, so suddenly cut off.

'My poor Duke!' said Jansoulet.

'A great loss for the country,' said the banker feelingly.

The Nabob answered naïvely:

'For me chiefly, for if he had lived——Ah! you are very lucky, very lucky!'

But, fearing to hurt his friend's feelings, he added quickly:

'The fact is, you are really clever, very clever!'

The Baron looked at him with such a knowing, funny wink, that his black lashes disappeared in his yellow grease.

'No,' said he, 'it is not me who is clever, it is Marie.'

'Marie? who is Marie?'

'Why, the Baroness. When she was christened, she dropped the name of Yanina for that of Marie. That's a woman for you! She

understands the banking business, and life in Paris, better than I do. It is she who manages everything.'

'You are very happy,' sighed Jansoulet.

His sadness was an eloquent commentary on Mademoiselle Afchin's deficiencies. After a moment's silence, the Baron resumed:

'She is very angry with you, Marie, you know. She will not be pleased when she hears of this conversation.'

He knitted his heavy brows, as if he regretted their reconciliation, at the thought of the curtain-lecture in store for him.

Jansoulet stammered:

'But I have not done her any harm!'

'Come, come, you have not been very polite to her, have you? Think of the insult she received, when we paid you our wedding visit, and your wife sent us word she was not at home for an old slave. Our friendship ought to have been stronger than a prejudice. Women never forget that sort of thing.'

'But I am innocent of all this, old fellow. You know how proud those Afchins are.'

Poor Nabob! *He* was not proud, I assure you. He had such a piteous, apologising look, before the frown of his friend, that the latter took pity on him. Really, the cemetery was affecting the Baron.

'Listen to me, Bernard; there is but one thing for you to do. If you wish us to be friends again, as we used to be, if we are not to have shaken hands for nothing, I must obtain from my wife to let bygones be bygones. If not, there is nothing done. When Mademoiselle Afchin refused to receive us, you let her, did you not? Well, it is just the same with me. If, when I come home, Marie tells me: "I do not wish you to be friends," I shall throw you overboard, notwithstanding all my assurances to the contrary. For the best thing for a man is to have peace at home, and to obtain that, I would sacrifice all my friends!'

'But what must I do, then?' asked the terrified Nabob.

'Listen, and I will tell you. The Baroness is at home every Saturday. Come and pay us a visit with your wife the day after to-morrow. You will find at my place the best society in Paris. Not a word shall be said about the past. The ladies shall speak of ribbons, dresses, and things that women talk about, and there will be an end of our quarrel. We shall be friends, as we used to be; and since you have got into a mess, well! we shall get you out of it.'

'Do you think you can?' said the Nabob, with a doubtful shake of his head. 'I am deep in the mud, old boy.'

Once more did Hemerlingue's sly eyeballs disappear in his flesh, like two flies in butter.

'Of course you are. I pressed you hard. You play pretty well. The fifteen millions lent to the Bey was a splendid stroke! Bold game,

that! .But you don't hold your cards properly; you show your hand.'

Hitherto they had spoken in a sort of whisper, influenced as they were by the silence of the necropolis; but by degrees, these two men, discussing human interests, raised their voices, amidst those tombs which proclaimed the vanity of human affairs, amidst those flat stones loaded with dates and ciphers, as if to remind us that death is a mere matter of time, ascertainable by calculation, the reliable result of a problem.

Hemerlingue, happy to see his friend so humble before him, advised him as to his affairs, with which he seemed to be thoroughly acquainted. According to him the Nabob might yet get out of his scrape. It all depended on his return being confirmed by the Chamber. But Jansoulet had no confidence in his star now. In losing Mora, he had lost all.

'You lose Mora, but you find me; and the

one is as good as the other, I assure you,' said the banker calmly.

'No, no! it is impossible. It is too late. Le Merquier has finished his report. It is said to be terrible.'

'Well! if he has finished his report, he must begin another of a milder kind.'

'What do you mean? How?'

The Baron looked at him, absolutely stupefied.

'My dear fellow, you must be getting weak. You ask me how? Why, offer him one, two, three hundred thousand francs, if necessary.'

'You don't think of it! Le Merquier! that upright, conscientious man! They call him "My Conscience" in the Chamber.'

This time Hemerlingue's roar of laughter burst out with extraordinary vigour, and rolled away to the very depths of neighbouring mausoleums, unaccustomed to so much irreverence.

'"My Conscience," an upright man! You

are truly amusing! Don't you know that that conscience belongs to me, and that——'

He stopped, looked behind him, as if troubled by some noise he had heard.

'Listen,' said he.

It was his own laugh re-echoed from the bottom of some vault, as if the idea of Le Merquier's conscience was immensely relished by the very dead themselves.

'Let us walk a little,' said he. 'It is getting cold on this bench.'

Whilst they were walking among the tombs, he explained to him that bribes play in France as important a part as they do in the East. Only the thing was done a little more delicately, behind a screen, as it were:

'Take Le Merquier, for example. Instead of offering him your money bluntly, openly, in a big purse, as you would do to a seraskier, you must find a pretext. He is fond of pictures, you know; he is always dealing with Schwalbach, who makes use of him to decoy

Catholic customers. Well! offer him a picture, a memento to hang up on the wall of his library. The only thing is to put a sufficiently high price. But you'll see; I shall take you to him, and shall show you how the trick is played.'

And happy at the wonderment of the Nabob, who, to flatter him, exaggerated the expression of his surprise, and opened wide his eyes with an air of admiration, the banker enlarged on his text, and gave him a regular lecture on the philosophy of Parisian and worldly doings.

'Look here, old chum, the thing you must chiefly observe in Paris is what they call keeping up appearances. That's the only thing you need mind, in fact—appearances! You don't mind them enough. You arrive here, your breast open to all; you are hail-well-met with everyone, and show yourself in fact just as you are. You walk about as you used to do in Tunis, in the bazaars and "*sooks*." That's the

reason why you made such a fool of yourself, my dear Bernard.'

He stopped to take breath, exhausted. He had spoken more words in one hour than he usually spent in one year. They perceived that, while talking, they had unwittingly come back to Mora's grave, on an open platform, from which the eyes saw, over a thousand closely pressed roofs, Montmartre and the hills of Chaumont, like large waves in the distance. With the hill of Père-la-Chaise you had the three waves, following each other at equal distances, of which each bound of the sea is composed when the tide is coming. In the depressions, between those hills, lights were already twinkling, like large lanterns, through the slowly rising violet mist. The chimneys, some of which were smoking, looked like masts and steamer funnels; and the Parisian ocean seemed to land all those craft with three waves, each smaller than the preceding one, to the black Plutonian shore of Père-la-Chaise. The sky had cleared, as often

happens towards the evening of rainy days. That broad expanse of sky looked splendid, tinged as it was with all the colours of a setting sun, and it served as a background against which stood in relief Mora's family vault, with its four allegorical figures in imploring, meditative, thoughtful attitudes, rendered more impressive still by the melancholy light of the dying day. Nothing remained of the official speeches and condolence. The trampled ground, masons at work, washing the stains of the plaster from off the threshold, were the only marks of the recent inhumation.

All at once, the door of the ducal vault was shut with the loud slam of its metallic weight. Henceforth the late Minister of State remained alone, all alone in the darkness of death, so much thicker than the shades of approaching night, which were now invading the winding avenues, the staircases, the bases of various columns, pyramids, and crypts, whereas their summits were still bathed in light. Grave-

diggers, all white with the chalky dust of dry bones, were leaving with their tools and provision bags. Stealthy mourners, tearing themselves regretfully from their prayers and tears, glided along the trees, with the silent motion of night birds; whilst from the distant entrances of Père-la-Chaise, voices arose—melancholy calls announcing the closing of the place. The mournful day was over. The necropolis, left now to itself, became an immense wood, with its roads marked at the corners with crosses. In the recess of a glen, the windows of a guard's house became tipped with light. A rustling shiver passed through the foliage, and lost itself like a whisper at the extremities of the dark alleys.

'Let us go,' said the two old friends, who had by degrees become affected by the evening cold, greater here than elsewhere. But before leaving this spot, Hemerlingue, following his thought, pointed to the monument with the floating marble draperies of its corners, and the imploring hands of its figures.

'Look! there lies the man who knew how to keep up appearances.'

Jansoulet took his arm to help him down the slope:

'Yes, he was clever and strong. But you are stronger and cleverer than all,' said he, with his strange Gascon accent.

Hemerlingue did not deny it.

'It is all my wife's doing,' said he. 'Therefore, let me advise you again to make friends with her, otherwise——'

'Oh, don't you fear! We'll come on Saturday; but you must take me to Le Merquier.'

Whilst the two shadows, the one square and tall, the other short and bulky, were disappearing in the windings of the great labyrinth; whilst Jansoulet's voice, guiding his friend with a 'This way, old fellow; lean on me, old boy,' was gradually becoming fainter in the distance, a belated ray of the sun, falling on the platform which they had just left, lit up

behind them the expressive and colossal bust, the broad forehead, the long hair thrown back, the powerful and ironical lips—of Balzac who was looking at them.

CHAPTER III.

BARONESS HEMERLINGUE.

At the end of the long archway leading to Hemerlingue & Son's offices—dark passage which old Joyeuse had for ten years lighted up and coloured with his dreams—a monumental staircase, with a wrought-iron baluster, a true staircase of old Paris, led, on the left, to the reception-rooms of the Baroness. Those rooms looked out on the yard, and were situated above the bank, so that, during the fine season, when the windows were open, the sound of gold and silver pieces handled on the counters, deadened by the high thick curtains of the windows, formed a sort of business accompaniment to the whispered conversations of a worldly Catholicism.

This gives you at once an idea of these rooms, no less strange than the lady who did the honours of them. There was in them a vague flavour of the vestry-room mixed with the bustle of the Exchange and the most refined worldliness; heterogeneous elements, which met and crossed each other there, but yet remained perfectly distinct, just as the Seine separates the noble Catholic Faubourg—under whose patronage had taken place the notorious conversion of the Mussulman woman—from the banking quarter where Hemerlingue lived and moved. The Levantine society—pretty numerous in Paris, and composed for the most part of German Jews, bankers, and commission-agents, who, after having made colossal fortunes in the East, continue to do business, just to keep their hand in—used to show themselves very assiduously here on the Baroness's 'at home' days. The Tunisians who happened to be in Paris, never failed to call upon the wife of the great banker in favour with the Bey, and old Colonel

Brahim, the Bey's agent in Paris, with his hanging lip and blood-shot eyes, regularly took his nap there every Saturday on the same couch.

'Your drawing-room smells of burnt sulphur, my dear,' said the old Princess of Dions, laughing, to the new Marie whom she and Le Merquier had held on the founts. Nevertheless, the presence of all those heretics—Jews, Mussulmans, and even renegades—of those big fretted women, so awkwardly dressed, loaded with gold and long eardrops—perfect frights if ever there were any—did not prevent the noble Faubourg from visiting, surrounding, and watching over, the young neophyte. She was a sort of plaything for those noble ladies, a very supple, very docile doll, whom they took out and showed about, whose simplicity and *naïveté* in the matter of gospel lore they quoted, with all the greater glee because of the piquant contrast it made with her past life. There might, perhaps, also be, at the bottom of

those amiable sponsors' hearts, the hope of meeting, in that Oriental society, some new proselyte, another opportunity of filling once more the aristocratic mission chapel with the moving spectacle of an adult's baptism; for such a ceremony carries the thought back to the early Christian times and the banks of the Jordan. Then, soon after, come the first communion, the renewal, the confirmation. And are not these so many pretexts for the godmother to accompany her god-daughter, guide that young soul, assist at the naïve outbursts of new-born faith, and make a proper display of beautiful toilettes, varied according to the brilliancy and importance of the ceremony? Unfortunately, rich bankers and mighty barons do not very often bring to Paris Armenian slaves, whom they have taken to be their lawful wives.

A slave? Yes, that was the stain in the past life of that Oriental woman, bought formerly at the bazaar of Adrianople for the Emperor of Morocco; then, at the death of

the Emperor, when his harem was sold, bought by the young Bey Ahmed. Hemerlingue had married her when she left this new harem; but no woman at Tunis, Moorish, Turkish, or European, ever consented to treat that former slave on a footing of equality. It is thus that, by a like prejudice, the best disguised quadroon is for ever separated from the pure creole. The Hemerlingues met again that unconquerable repugnance even in Paris, where foreign colonies form small coteries full of touchiness and local traditions. Yanina was therefore obliged to pass two or three years in complete solitude; but she was an ambitious, self-willed, and obstinate woman, and therefore stifled her disappointment and utilised her leisure. She learned the French language thoroughly, bade for ever farewell to her embroidered vests and pink-silk pantaloons; accustomed her forms and manners to the European customs and long floating dresses; and, at last, one fine evening she presented, to the bewildered Parisians, the

fine, delicate, and original, if a little wild, face of a woman, who looked more as if she were a creation of Leonard than a Mussulman woman.

She sacrificed her religion soon after having reformed her dress. Madame Hemerlingue had already long ago given up all kinds of Mahometan practices, when Maître le Merquier, the intimate friend of the house, and her guide in Paris, made them understand that the Baroness's solemn conversion would open to her the doors of that side of Parisian society, the access to which is becoming more difficult every day, in proportion as the remainder of France becomes more and more democratised. Should she conquer the Faubourg Saint-Germain, all the rest would follow. And so it turned out, when, after the notoriety of her baptism, it became known that the greatest names in France did not disdain to go to the Baroness's Saturday 'at home.' Mesdames Gügenheim, Feuernberg, Caraïskari, Maurice

Trott—all those wives of famous Tunis millionnaires—renounced then their prejudices, and begged to be received by the former slave. Alone, Madame Jansoulet—her mind freshly stocked with Oriental ideas, as her apartment was with Tunisian things, such as a narghilee, ostrich's feathers, &c.—protested against what she called the unbecomingness, the cowardice of such a proceeding, and declared, once for all, that she would never visit such a 'creature.' A little retrograde movement became immediately visible among Mesdames Gügenheim, Caraïskari, and others; as often happens in Paris, when a tenacious resistance is offered by a few to the persevering efforts of one trying to creep into society. They had gone too far to be able to retreat with a good grace, but they insisted on making the Baroness feel the price of their favour and the greatness of their sacrifice; and Marie could appreciate the value of those things by the protecting tone of the Levantines, who called her 'My dear child,' 'My good

friend,' with a shade of contempt in their tone. Henceforth her hatred for the Jansoulets knew no bounds—a harem hatred, complex and ferocious, which would have satisfied itself with nothing short of strangling and drowning, had this course been possible. But if that process presents at Paris difficulties unknown on the banks of Lake El Baheira, she was, nevertheless, preparing in her own way the traditional leather bag and bowstring.

Now that we have explained that rabid hatred, it is easy to imagine the surprise and agitation which were stirring that little corner of exotic society, when it became known that, not only did the fat woman—as they called Mademoiselle Afchin—consent to see the Baroness, but that she was to pay her the first visit on her next Saturday 'at home.' Neither the Fuernberg nor the Trott wished to miss such a treat. The Baroness, on her side, omitted nothing to give this solemn satisfaction the greatest possible *éclat*. She wrote, paid visits, and in short be-

stirred herself so, that, though the season was already far advanced, Madame Jansoulet, on reaching the Mansion in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, at about four o'clock, might have seen, before the arched gateway, side by side with the mauve-coloured livery of the Princess of Dions and many other authentic coats-of-arms, the extravagant and pretentious heraldry, the loud colours of numerous bankers' coaches, and the tall powdered footmen of the Caraïskaris.

Upstairs, in the large reception-rooms, was to be seen the same strange vainglorious assemblage. There was, on the carpets of the two first empty rooms, a continual going and coming, and a great rustling of silk dresses, until you reached the boudoir where the Baroness held her court, dividing her attentions, her wheedling ways, between the two distinct camps; on one side, dark toilettes of modest appearance, the good taste of which was appreciable by expert eyes only; on the other, all the colours of the spring, rich bodices, a profusion of diamonds, floating

scarves, and foreign fashions, in which was felt a kind of regret for the luxurious and showy existence of warmer climes; here the waving of fans, there discreet whisperings; very few men, among whom some orthodox youths, silent, motionless, sucking the knobs of their sticks; two or three heteroclite figures standing behind the broad backs of their wives, and stooping to speak as if they offered smuggled articles for sale; and lastly, in one corner, the fine patriarchal beard and violet hood of an orthodox Armenian bishop.

In order to entertain these various sets of worldly women, and to keep her drawing-room full until the famous interview, the Baroness kept continually changing her place, putting in a word in ten different conversations, raising her sweet harmonious voice to the warbling tone which distinguishes Oriental women. She displayed all her wheedling caressing ways, called to her help all the resources of her versatile mind—as supple as her waist—talked of every-

thing, and mixed, as is proper, in her conversation, objects of fashion and charity sermons, theatres and bazaars, her milliner and her confessor. She added a great personal charm to that acquired science which enables a lady to play her part in the graceful reception of her guests. Her tact was noticeable even in her simple black dress, which brought out still more the paleness of her complexion, her eyes as large as a houri's, and her shiny plaited hair, parted above her smooth narrow forehead. What mystery behind that forehead, which seemed locked by her tightened lips, and which concealed from curious eyes the varied and crowded past of that late odalisque, to whom it was impossible to assign an age, who was herself ignorant of the day of her birth, and did not even remember to have been a child! If the power of doing evil—very rare in women, whom their impressionable nature exposes to be carried away by so many different currents—could be found in one individual soul,

it would have been found here, in that slave, accustomed to concessions and vile deeds, rebellious but patient, and a perfect mistress of herself, like all those who are accustomed to wear a veil over their eyes, and who, behind it, can lie without scruple or danger. No one could at that moment have suspected the anguish which tortured her. She was kneeling before the princess—a good, simple, old woman, of whom Madame Fuernberg used to say: 'Call that a princess? nonsense!'

'Oh, I pray, godmother, do not go yet,' said the Baroness.

And she displayed all her caressing, coaxing little ways to attain her object; but of course without telling her that she wished to keep her till the arrival of Jansoulet, to make her grace her triumph.

'You see,' said the good lady, pointing to the majestic Armenian, who sat silent and grave, his tasselled hat upon his knees, 'I must take that poor Monsignor to the *Grand Saint-Chris-*

tophe, to buy some medals. He could never manage without me.'

'Oh yes, yes, do stay—you must—only a few minutes more.'

And the Baroness cast a stealthy glance towards the rich antique clock which was in a corner of the drawing-room.

It was five o'clock, and the fat woman had not yet come. The Levantines were beginning to titter behind their fans. Fortunately the servants brought in tea, Spanish wines, and those delightful Turkish sweetmeats which could only be found in that house. The odalisque had learnt to make them in the East, where the receipts are preserved in harems, as certain secrets for making rare confectioneries are preserved in our own convents. This caused a diversion. Hemerlingue, who, on Saturdays, sometimes left his office to chat with the ladies, was drinking a glass of Madeira near the little tea table, and talking with Maurice Trott, the late bathing man of Saïd Pacha, when his wife approached

him, ever calm and placid. He knew what anger was brewing under that impenetrable calmness, and asked her timidly, in a low voice:

'What, nobody?'

'Nobody. You see what affront you expose me to.'

As she said that, she smiled, her eyes half closed, and picked, with the tips of her nails, a crumb of cake which was in his long black whiskers; but her little transparent nostrils were quivering with terrible eloquence.

'Oh, she is sure to come,' said the banker, speaking with his mouth full. 'I am sure she will come.'

A rustling of silk, like that of a spreading train brushing the carpet, made the Baroness turn her head round quickly. To the great joy of the Levantines, who were watching everything, it was not the lady who was so eagerly expected.

No, the new-comer did not resemble Mademoiselle Afchin. She was a slender, elegant

blonde, with fatigued features, an irreproachable toilette, altogether worthy to bear a name so celebrated as that of Dr. Jenkins. For the last two or three months, the fair Madame Jenkins had much changed, and grown old. There is in the life of a woman, who has long remained young, a moment, when the years which have passed over her head without leaving a wrinkle on her brow, write themselves down brutally, all together, in indelible characters. On seeing her, you no longer say: 'How beautiful she is!' but: 'How beautiful she must have been!' And that cruel way of speaking of her in the past, of throwing back in the distance what was but yesterday a visible fact, constitutes the beginning of old age, after which triumphs cease and are changed into *souvenirs*. Was it owing to the disappointment which she felt on seeing the Doctor's wife instead of Madame Jansoulet, or was it because of the discredit which Mora's death had thrown on the fashionable Doctor and indirectly on her who bore

his name? It was probably owing to these two causes, and perhaps also to a third, that the Baroness received Madame Jenkins so coldly. A slight greeting, muttered rather than spoken, a few hurried words, and she turned round again towards the noble battalion who were munching their sweetmeats.

They ceased to whisper; they talked. Lamps were brought in, and added their cheerfulness to the gathering, but at the same time were the harbinger of its approaching end. Already a few persons, who felt no interest in the great event, were going away. And yet the Jansoulets did not come!

Suddenly, a strong, hurried step was heard, and the Nabob appeared, but alone. He wore a well-fitting black frock-coat, a most perfect tie, and tight gloves; but his face was agitated, his eyes glared wildly, and all his frame was trembling from the terrible scene which he had just endured.

She had refused to come!

During the morning he had told her maids to dress Madame for three o'clock, as he always did when he took the Levantine anywhere. That person, too indolent to assume any kind of responsibility, left to others the care of thinking, deciding, and acting for her; but when she was ready she did not object going anywhere. Jansoulet had relied upon that easy good-humour to take her to Hemerlingue's. But after breakfast, when Jansoulet, gloriously attired, quite ready, all but his gloves, which he was putting on with tremendous efforts, sent to inquire of Madame how long she would be, Madame sent him word back that she did not wish to go out. This was a grave matter, so grave indeed, that, instead of sending another messenger—for they usually carried on their conjugal conversations by means of maids and valets—he rushed up the stairs hurriedly, and bounced like a gust of the mistral into the padded apartments of the Levantine.

She was still in bed, dressed in the long,

two-coloured silk tunic, opened in front, which Moorish women call a *djebba*, and wore on her head a little cap with a gold braid, from which her thick, fine black hair fell dishevelled upon her broad face, flushed by the meal she had just made. The sleeves of the *djebba* were open, and showed two enormous, deformed arms, loaded with bracelets and chains. Her hands wandered among a confused mass of little mirrors, red chaplets, smelling bottles, small pipes, cigarette-cases, in short, all the childish trifles which surround a Moorish woman at the moment of her rising.

The room was full of tobacco smoke, heavy and drowsy because of the opium with which Turkish tobacco is prepared, and it presented the same appearance of disorder which was noticeable on the bed. Some negresses went and came, slowly taking away the coffee things; the favourite gazelle was thrusting her fine muzzle to the bottom of a cup, trying to lick it, and overturning it; whilst, familiarly sitting

on the foot of the bed, the dark Cabassu read in a loud voice a drama in verse, which was to be soon played at Cardailhac's theatre. The Levantine was absolutely stupefied and bewildered by that reading.

'My dear,' said she to Jansoulet, with her thick Flemish accent, 'I do not know what Cardailhac is thinking of. I have been reading this play, *Révolte*, about which he is raving. But it is really stupefying. It is not at all the thing for the stage.'

'What do I care for the stage,' said Jansoulet, furious, in spite of all his respect for the daughter of the Afchins. 'How is it you are not dressed yet? Did they not tell you we are going out?'

Oh, yes, they had told her, but she had begun to read that stupid play.

'We will go out to-morrow,' said she, with a drowsy voice.

'To-morrow! It is impossible—we are expected this very day.—An important visit.'

'Where?'

He hesitated for one second, then:

'To Hemerlingue's,' said he.

She raised upon him her large eyes, really thinking that he was joking. Jansoulet related how he had met the Baron at Mora's funeral, and what had been agreed between them.

'You may go if you please,' she said coldly; 'but you know me very little if you think that *I*, a demoiselle Afchin, shall ever put my foot in the house of that slave!'

Cabassu, seeing the turn which the debate was taking, had prudently disappeared into the neighbouring room, carrying away the five copy-books of *Révolte* piled under his arm.

'Come, come,' said the Nabob to his wife, 'I see that you do not suspect the terrible position in which I am. Listen then.'

Without minding the maids or negresses, with that supreme contempt of an Oriental for his servants, he began to draw the picture of his great distress—his fortune sequestered at

Tunis, his credit ebbing away in Paris, all his life suspended until the Chamber's decision on his case, the influence of Hemerlingue on the gentleman who had drawn the report, and the necessary sacrifice of self-love to such powerful considerations—at least for a time. He spoke with warmth, for he longed to persuade and convince; but when he had done, she simply answered him:

'I shall not go!'

All his frame was trembling.

'Come, come, you don't mean it. It is not possible. Think that all my fortune, the future of our children, the name you bear, everything is at stake on the step which I ask of you, and which you cannot refuse to take.'

He might have spoken till doomsday; all his words would have been vain before that silent, unshaken obstinacy—A demoiselle Afchin must not visit a slave.

'By heaven, Madame,' said he violently, 'that slave is a thousand times better than you.

By her intelligence she has increased tenfold her husband's fortune, whereas you——'

They had been twelve years married, and this was the first time he had dared to oppose his wife. Did he shrink from such an act of treason, or did he suddenly see that he was about to open between them an impassable abyss? Be the case as it may, he stopped, changed his tone instantly, and assumed the coaxing voice with which children are persuaded to do the thing they do not like.

'Little Martha, do that for me; get up, darling; dress yourself. It is for your own sake I ask you, for the sake of your own comfort and luxurious life. What would become of you if, owing to a whim, a thoughtless refusal, we found ourselves presently reduced to misery, eh?'

That word misery awoke absolutely no idea in the Levantine's mind. They might speak of it before her, as they do of death before little children; she was not frightened by it, because

she did not know it. She had quite made up her mind to stay in bed in her *djebba*; and in order to affirm her decision still more strongly, she lighted a new cigarette with the end of the one she had just smoked; and whilst the Nabob begged and supplicated 'his darling wife,' and promised her a pearl diadem one hundred times handsomer than the one she had, if she would only come, she looked at the clouds of drowsy smoke which rose to the ceiling and enveloped her in serene calmness.

At last, before that refusal, that silent obstinacy, that wayward stubbornness, which opposed him like a bar of iron, Jansoulet let loose his anger, and straightening himself up with imperious command:

'I will it,' said he—'Get up!'

And turning to the negresses:

'Dress your mistress at once,' added he.

He was a rough boor at bottom, that son of a Provençal nailer; and at this crisis which shook him so violently, his original nature as-

serted itself. With a brutal and contemptuous motion, he tore away the bed covering, flinging to the ground the thousand trifles which were on it, and forcing the Levantine to bound half-naked to her feet, with a lightness positively marvellous for that bulky person. She roared under the outrage, wrapped her dwarfish bust in her tunic, and with her little cap awry among her wild hair, she began to abuse her husband to her heart's content:

'Never, do you hear, never, never. You will have to drag me, to make me go to that——'

Filth and dirt poured out of her heavy lips as from the open mouth of a sewer. Jansoulet might have thought himself in one of those horrid dens, in the vicinity of the port at Marseilles, hearing the abuse of a common woman and a *nervi*, or witnessing an open-air quarrel between Genoese, Maltese, and Provençal girls, around the sacks of corn which are being unloaded on the quay, when, on all fours, they

pick up the dropping grains amid clouds of dust. Yes, she stood revealed—a very Levantine of a seaport town, who, in the evening, from her terrace, or from her barge, has heard sailors pouring volleys of abuse at each other, and has remembered everything. The unhappy man stared at her in bewilderment and horror, overwhelmed by all he was forced to listen to, and by the sight of her grotesque person foaming in the mouth and raving.

'No, no! I shall not go—I shall not go,' she repeated, roaring.

And that was the mother of his children, a demoiselle Afchin!

Suddenly, at the thought that his fate was in the hands of that woman, that she could save him by only putting on a dress, that time was flying, that it would soon be too late, and that she refused, he lost all control over himself, his features became distorted, and the fumes of crime rose to his brain. He walked straight upon her, his hands open, his fingers clenched,

and looking so terrible, that the female Afchin rushed terrified to the door by which the shampooer had left the room, and called out:

'Aristide!'

That cry, that voice, that intimacy of his wife with a hireling! It was a revelation! Jansoulet stopped, all his anger vanished, and, with a motion of disgust, he rushed out, slamming the doors behind him, more anxious to escape from the misfortune and horror which polluted his house, than to go to Hemerlingue's in quest of the promised succour.

A quarter of an hour later, he was stepping into Hemerlingue's house; and, making a sign of despair to the banker, he approached the Baroness, and stammered the ready-made phrase which had been dinned so often into his ears on the evening of his ball. 'His wife indisposed —regretted very much that she could not——' She did not give him time to finish, but rising slowly, uncoiled herself like a fine adder—all the turning folds of her dress around her—

and said, with her most correct accent, without looking at him:

'Oh! I knew very well—I knew very well!'

As she said these words she left her place, and did not again pay the least attention to him. He tried to approach Hemerlingue, who pretended to be deeply engaged in conversation with Maurice Trott. Then he went to Madame Jenkins, whose isolation bore some resemblance to his own. But while talking with the poor woman, as weary and anxious as he himself was, he watched the Baroness doing the honours of that drawing-room, so cosy-looking compared with his large gilt apartments.

The guests were retiring. Madame Hemerlingue accompanied a few of her visitors to the door, held her forehead to be kissed by the old princess, bent her head under the blessing of the Armenian Bishop, and answered with a smile the parting bow of the fashionable youths and their sticks. In short, she found for each of

her guests the exact kind of farewell required, and dispensed it with the most perfect ease. The wretched man could not but compare that Eastern slave who had become such a thorough Parisian, so distinguished among the most exquisite society in the world, with the other woman he had left at home—the European, brutalised by Levant life, stupefied with Turkish tobacco, and bloated with idleness. He had been foiled in his ambition, wounded in his pride as a husband, and humbled by that alliance of which he now perceived the vanity and danger—last cruel blow of fate, which deprived him of home-happiness, at the very moment of his political and social disappointments.

By degrees, the drawing-room was becoming empty. The Levantines were going one after the other, and each new departure added greater loneliness to the immense vacant space. Madame Jenkins had left, and there remained only two or three ladies, whom Jansoulet did not know. Among these the mistress of the house sought

a shelter against him. But Hemerlingue was now disengaged, and the Nabob joined him at the moment when he was stealthily trying to escape to his office—situated on the same story, its door facing that of the living-rooms. Jansoulet went out with him, forgetting in his trouble to bow to the Baroness. When they reached the landing, decorated like an anteroom, Hemerlingue, who had been very cold and reserved as long as he had felt the eyes of his wife upon him, resumed a more friendly way.

'It is a great pity,' whispered he, as if he had feared to be heard, 'that Madame Jansoulet would not come.'

Jansoulet answered him by a motion expressive of terrible helplessness and despair.

'Yes, a great pity—a great pity!' repeated the other, breathing hard, and fumbling in his pocket to find his key.

'Come, old fellow,' said the Nabob, taking his hand; 'because our wives cannot agree, it is

no reason why we—why we should not remain friends. What a good chat we had the other day—do you remember?'

'Oh, yes, of course,' said the Baron, withdrawing his hand to open the door, which glided noiselessly on its hinges, and showed a high office, and the solitary lamp burning before the enormous empty armchair. 'Now, let us part. I have some letters to write for to-day's post.'

'*Ya didon, mónci!*'[1] said the poor Nabob, trying a joke, and using the *Sabir* patois, in order to awake in the mind of his old chum all the pleasant recollections which had been stirred two days before. 'We are still going to Le Merquier, are we not? We are to offer him a picture, you know. What day shall we say?'

'Ah, yes! Le Merquier. I forgot. Well, I shall let you know—very soon—I'll write to you.'

'You won't forget? You know how urgent——'

[1] 'Hallo, I say, Monsieur!—'

'Oh, yes, I shall write to you.'

And the bulky man shut his door quickly, as if he were afraid to be surprised by his wife.

Two days later, the Nabob received a note from Hemerlingue, written in small characters; an almost illegible scrawl, made more complicated still by a crowd of abbreviations, supposed to simulate the business jargon, but in reality meant to conceal his great deficiency in the matter of spelling. Here it is verbatim:—

Mon ch. anc. Cam.—

Je ne puis décid. t'accom. chez Le Merq. Trop d'aff. en ce mom. D'aill. v. ser. mieux seuls pour caus. Vas y carrém. On t'att. R. Cassette, tous les mat. de 8 *à* 10.

A toi cor.

HEM.[1]

[1] 'My dear old Comrade,—

'I am really unable to accompany you to Le Merquier's. Too much to do just now. Besides, it will be better if you are alone, and can talk more freely. Be bold. He awaits you. Rue Cassette, every morning from 8 to 10.

'Yours cordially,

'HEMERLINGUE.'

A little lower down, by way of postscript, was written, in very small letters also, but very legibly :—

'*A picture da virtu, if possible.*'

What must he think of that letter?

Was he really desirous of helping him, or was this a polite way of breaking his promise? Whatever was the real interpretation, he could not hesitate. Time was short. Therefore, Jansoulet made a courageous effort—for Le Merquier really awed him—and one fine morning he went to call upon him.

Our strange Paris seems—both with respect to its population and its diversity of aspects—like an epitome of the whole world. You find, in the Marais, narrow streets, carved and vermicular doors, projecting gables and strange balconies, which remind you of old Heidelberg. The Faubourg Saint-Honoré, in its broadest part, in the neighbourhood of the Russian Church—with its white minarets and golden domes—calls up to the mind a quarter of Moscow. On Montmartre,

I could point to a picturesque and thickly-peopled corner which is purely Algerine. Small, low, but bright houses, with brass plates on the doors, and private gardens behind, give some parts of Paris—between Neuilly and the Champs-Elysées—the appearance of English streets. Close to Saint-Sulpice, the Rue Féron and the Rue Cassette rest peacefully under the shadow of the big church towers; their pavement is uneven, they have knockers on their doors, and they seem to have been brought there from a provincial cathedral town—from Tours or Orléans, for instance—and to have been taken from the vicinity of the Cathedral or the Bishop's palace, where great trees thrust their branches out over the wall, and wave their foliage to the sound of the bells or of the chanted responses.

In that part of Paris last described, in the neighbourhood of the Catholic Club—of which he had just been elected chairman—lived Maître le Merquier, a barrister, the *Député* of Lyons, the agent of all the great religious corporations

all over France. Him had Hemerlingue—with an amount of cunning really very deep for that corpulent man—entrusted with the vast interests of his firm.

The ground floor of his house was occupied by a Catholic bookseller's shop, slumbering in its odour of vestry-room and coarse paper—used for printing stories of miracles. Jansoulet, arriving at about nine o'clock, went up the broad staircase, whitewashed like that of a convent. He felt himself penetrated by that provincial and Catholic atmosphere which reminded him of his former life in Provence, and revived those impressions of his boyhood as yet intact and fresh in him, thanks to his long residence abroad; for old Françoise's son had neither had time nor leisure to efface them from his mind since his arrival in Paris.

Worldly hypocrisy had already assumed all its varied forms and put on all its masks before him, with the exception of one only, that of pious uprightness; and, therefore, he could not believe

in the venality of a man who lived amidst such surroundings as these. When he was ushered into the antechamber—a large parlour, with stiff muslin curtains, as fine as surplices, and having for its only ornament a large and fine copy of Tintoretto's 'Dead Christ,' hung over the door—his doubt and confusion of mind became changed into an indignant conviction of Le Merquier's integrity. The thing was impossible! He had been led into error with respect to Le Merquier. It was an audacious piece of slander, such as Paris is so apt to spread abroad. It was perhaps one of those cruel snares, such as those into which he had been so often entrapped during the last six months. No, no, that touchy conscience, so well known in the Courts of Law and at the Chamber, that austere and morose personage, could not be treated like those fat, pot-bellied pachas, with loose girths and floating sleeves, so convenient to receive purses full of sequins. Were he to try such means of corruption, he would inevitably expose himself to a

scandalous refusal, and to the legitimate repulse of outraged honour.

The Nabob was thus communing with himself as he sat upon the oak bench, which ran all round the room, polished by serge dresses and the coarse cloth of priests' cassocks. Notwithstanding the early hour, several persons were already waiting there, as well as he : a Dominican friar, with an ascetic and serene face, was pacing the room up and down in long strides ; two good Sisters, hidden under their white coifs, were counting their beads to pass time and shorten the weariness of waiting; priests of the Diocese of Lyons, noticeable by the form of their hats, and other grave and thoughtful personages; sat round the large wooden table placed in the middle of the room. They were perusing some of those pious and edifying papers which are printed on the hill of Fourvières, such as *L'Echo du Purgatoire*, *Le Rosier de Marie*, which give to their subscribers, by way of premium, one year's Pontifical indulgences and remissions of future

punishments. A few whispered words, a smothered cough, the soft murmur of the good Sisters' prayer, brought back to Jansoulet's mind the confused and distant sensation of hours passed waiting in some corner of his village church, near a confessional, on days preceding a religious festival.

At last his turn to go in came, and, whatever doubt he might still have entertained respecting Monsieur le Merquier, it vanished as soon as he saw the large, simple, and severe closet—a little more adorned, however, than the ante-chamber—in which the barrister sat, exhibiting his lean person and the austerity of his principles. He was tall, stooping, with narrow shoulders, and wore that everlasting black coat, always too short in the sleeves, from which issued two black hands, square and flat, looking like two sticks of Indian ink, with the swollen veins to represent the Chinese characters.

The clerical Député's dull complexion was that of a Lyonese, grown mouldy between his

two rivers; but there was in his countenance a lively expression which was due to his double look—one sparkling but impenetrable, behind his spectacles, the other and more usual one, over the same spectacles, quick, distrustful, and dark—adumbrated by the shadow which the arch of the brows cast upon it, when the head was lowered and the eyes raised.

The Nabob was received with what might pass for a hearty welcome, compared with the formal bow which the colleagues were accustomed to exchange at the Chamber.

'I was expecting you,' said the barrister, showing the Nabob a seat near his desk.

He did not tell his sanctimonious-looking servant—a fellow dressed in black from head to foot—what one might almost have expected: 'to put by the hair-shirt and the discipline-whip,' but he told him not to come in, on any account, unless he rang the bell. Having said that, he arranged a few scattered papers, crossed his legs one over the other, and sank

into his armchair, with the air of a man who prepares to listen, and seems to concentrate all his attention in his ears, his chin resting on his hand, his eyes fixed on a heavy green rep curtain, which trailed the ground opposite him.

The moment was decisive, the situation embarrassing; but Jansoulet did not hesitate. One of the poor Nabob's pretensions was that he knew men as well as Mora; and that scent, which, said he, had never deceived him, warned him now that he stood before one of those rigidly honest and resolute men, whose marble conscience is proof against the pickaxe and blasting-powder. Was he not called 'My Conscience'? Jansoulet instantly changed his tactics, threw overboard all cunning hints and innuendoes, wherein his frank and valiant nature was ill at ease, and, with a bold head, laying his heart open, he addressed the upright man in such language as he was worthy to listen to.

'Do not be astonished, my dear colleague,'

said he, with a tremulous voice—which, however, soon became steady again—'do not be astonished if I called here to see you rather than merely asked to be heard in the third committee-room. The explanation which I have to offer is of such a delicate and confidental nature that I could not have given it publicly before my colleagues.'

Le Merquier cast, over his spectacles, a look full of dismay in the direction of the curtain. The conversation was clearly taking an unforeseen turn.

'I will not say a word as to the regularity of my return,' continued the Nabob. 'I am sure your report is impartial, and the expression of your loyal conscience. But there is one point upon which I have a few words to say. Sickening, slandering rumours have been spread about me, to which I have not answered, and which may have influenced the committee. I know the confidence which your colleagues place in you, Monsieur le Merquier. I know that if I succeed in convincing you, your word will

suffice to exonerate me, and that I shall not be under the painful necessity of exhibiting to the public gaze the skeleton which is locked in my cupboard. You know the charge made against me—I mean the most frightful, the most ignoble; for there are so many that I might allude to one, and you understand another. My enemies mention names, dates, and addresses. Well, sir, I bring you proofs of my complete innocence. I lay them before you—you alone—for I have very serious reasons to keep all this secret.'

He showed the barrister a stamped certificate from the French Consulate at Tunis, to the effect that for twenty years Jansoulet had left the principality twice only—the first time for Bourg-Saint-Audéol, to bid a last farewell to his dying father; the second to pay a three days' visit to his seat at Saint-Romans in company with the Bey.

'How is it, then, that with such an undeniable proof as this in my possession I did not bring an action against the libellers to clear

myself and confound them? Alas, sir, there is, you know, a cruel solidarity between the members of the same family. I had a brother, a poor weak and spoiled fellow, who has long rolled in the slush of Paris, lost his intelligence and his honour. Did he ever sink so low as to do that, which they accuse me of having done? I don't know. I have never dared to inquire. All I can say is that my poor father, who seems to have known more than anyone at home on that point, said to me with his dying breath: "Bernard, it is *l'aîné* who kills me. I die of shame, my boy."

He paused one moment to give his overpowering emotion time to calm down; then he continued:

"My father is dead, Monsieur le Merquier, but my mother is still living; and it is for her sake—not to trouble her repose—that I have hesitated, that I hesitate still, before a public justification. Hitherto the dirt which has be-

spattered me has not reached her. It is confined to a particular section of society, and remains within the limits of a special press, which the good woman knows nothing of. But a lawsuit, an action, would be a parade of our misfortune all over the country, and the *Messager's* articles would be reproduced by all the papers, even those of the little country place where my mother lives. They would spread the slander, publish my defence; and the poor woman would see her two children covered with shame at the same time, our name—the old peasant woman's only pride—tarnished for ever. She could not stand it. It would kill her; and I think my father's death is enough—— That is the reason why I remained silent under the imputation. I wished, if possible, to tire out my enemies by my silence. But I have need of a sponsor in the Chamber. I must not give them the right to oust me for disgraceful motives, and there-

fore it is that I came to you, to tell you all, as I would to a priest, a confessor, asking you at the same time not to reveal this conversation, even in the interest of my cause. That, my dear colleague, is the only thing I require of you—absolute discretion. For the rest, I rely on your sense of justice and loyalty.'

He rose, and was about to take his leave; but Le Merquier did not move; his eyes remained fixed on the green curtain opposite him, as if he were preparing his answer. At last:

'It shall be as you desire, my dear colleague,' said he. 'This conversation shall remain strictly confidential——You have told me nothing; I have heard nothing.'

The Nabob still glowing with his emotion, and who had expected that Le Merquier would have answered by a few hearty words, a warm grasp, felt suddenly seized with a strange anxiety. That coldness, that vacant look, were so embarrassing that he was already gaining

the door, with the awkward bow of men who feel they are not wanted there, when the other stopped him:

'Wait, dear colleague,' said he. 'Why are you in such haste to go?—Stay a little longer.—It is a true pleasure for me to meet a man like you. Our friend Hemerlingue told me you were very fond of pictures——'

Jansoulet was staggered. Those two words —'Hemerlingue—pictures'—so unexpectedly associated together in the same phrase, removed all his doubts, all his perplexities. But he did not yield at once. He allowed Le Merquier to feel his ground, drop ambiguous words, make hesitating advances:—He had heard a great deal of his honourable colleague's picture gallery—Would Monsieur Jansoulet consider it an indiscretion on his part, if he craved the favour——

'I shall be too happy,' said the Nabob, flattered in the most sensitive, because the most costly, part of his vanity. Then, looking

around him at the walls, he added with the tone of a connoisseur:

'You, too, have some very fine pictures, I see.'

'Oh!' said the other modestly, 'a very few only. Good pictures are so dear now!—It is an expensive taste, a passion which rich people only can satisfy—a true Nabob's passion,' added he, with a stealthy glance over his spectacles.

They were both prudent players, thus brought face to face. Only, Jansoulet felt a little bewildered in this situation, quite new to him, in which he must stand on the defensive, whereas his nature impelled him to deal the bold strokes of attack.

'When I think,' said the barrister, 'that I have been ten years covering these walls, and that there remains yet a panel to fill——'

Yes, so it was. Right in the middle of the high wall, there was a vacant, or rather a *vacated* place, judging from a big nail apparent

there, like a visible, almost coarse trace of the snare laid for the poor innocent man who straightway put his foot into it.

'Dear Monsieur le Merquier,' said he in his good-humoured, coaxing voice, 'I happen to have in my possession one of Tintoretto's Virgins, which would just fit in your panel——'

It was impossible to read in the barrister's eyes; for now they were sheltered by the spectacles.

'Allow me to hang it up there, opposite your desk,' continued the Nabob; 'it will occasionally remind you of me——'

'And make me less severe in my report. Do you mean that, sir?' thundered Le Merquier, who had sprung up and rung the bell. 'I have seen a good deal of impudence in my life, but never anything like this. Such offers to me, in my own house!'

'But, my dear colleague, I swear to you——'

'Show the gentleman out,' said the barrister to the gallows-bird-faced servant who

opened the door. And from the middle of his cabinet, before all the persons filling the parlour, whose prayers were thus ruthlessly interrupted, he pursued with withering words our poor Jansoulet, who bent his head and hastened to the door, stammering unconnected words as he went.

'You insult, you dishonour the Chamber in my person, sir,' roared Le Merquier, 'and I shall inform our colleagues this very day. This new complaint, added to all the others, will show you, in the result, that Paris is not Tunis, and that our consciences are not to be appraised and bought.'

When he had driven the money-changer from the temple, the just man shut his door, approached the mysterious green curtain, and, in a gentle tone of voice, which contrasted with his feigned anger, said:

'Did I do as you pleased, Baroness Marie?'

CHAPTER IV.

THE SITTING.

EXCEPTIONALLY, there had been no great breakfast that morning at Number 12 in the Place Vendôme. You might have seen, therefore, towards one o'clock, Monsieur Barreau, airing his majestic paunch at the entrance of the archway, surrounded by four or five scullions in white caps, and as many grooms in Scotch caps —an imposing group, this, which gave the sumptuous house the look of an hotel, with the servants disporting themselves on the step while waiting for the next train. One thing added to this resemblance, viz., the cab standing before the door, whilst the coachman was taking down an old-fashioned leather box, and a tall, straight old woman, in a yellow cap

and green shawl, jumped lightly down on the footpath, a basket under her arm, and looked at the number of the house with great attention. Having satisfied herself on that score, she approached the servants, and inquired whether Monsieur Bernard Jansoulet lived here.

'Yes, he livès here,' some one answered; 'but he is out.'

'Oh! it does not signify,' said the old lady simply. She came back to the coachman, directed him to put her box down under the archway, and paid him. This done, she thrust back her purse to the bottom of her pocket, with precautions eloquently expressive of provincial distrust towards Paris.

Ever since Jansoulet's return for Corsica, the servants had seen so many strange, foreign-looking individuals coming to stay a few days at the Nabob's, that they did not express much astonishment before that swarthy, dark-eyed woman, who, with her plain cap, resembled some old Corsican woman, just landed from her

native *mâquis*, though she distinguished herself from the islanders by her quiet and easy ways.

'And so, the master is not in?' said she in that tone of voice with which she addressed the country people, the servants of a Provençal *mas*, but which was little calculated to impress the insolent servants of a great Paris house.

'No, he is not in.'

'And the children?'

'They are learning their lessons You cannot see them.'

'And Madame?'

'She sleeps. No one is allowed to go into her room before three o'clock.'

The good woman seemed somewhat astonished that anyone should stay in bed so late; but good taste—that sure guide of a refined nature—restrained her from saying anything before the servants. She next inquired about Paul de Géry.

'He is travelling.'

'And Jean-Baptiste Bompain?'

'Gone to the Chamber with Monsieur.'

She knitted her thick, grey eyebrows.

'No matter, take my box upstairs.'

And with an arch wink of her black eye, which was like the revenge of her pride against the insolent looks with which these men stared at her, she added:

'I am the Mamma.'

Scullions and grooms walked respectfully a few steps backwards. Monsieur Barreau touched his cap, and said:

'I thought I had seen Madame before.'

'So thought I of you, my man,' answered the old woman, who suddenly felt cold at heart, as she remembered the sad *fêtes* prepared for the Bey.

'My man!' to a gentleman of Monsieur Barreau's importance! That alone raised her very high in the esteem of those people.

Grandeurs and splendours had little effect on the brave old woman, I assure you. She

was no mother Boby, who, at the Opéra Comique, goes into ecstasies over the gilding and gew-gaws. In fact, as she was ascending the grand staircase, behind her trunk, which was being taken up, neither the flowers on all the landings, nor the bronze statues which supported candelabra, prevented her from noticing that the dust lay one inch deep on the baluster, and that the carpet was in some places torn.

She was taken to the second floor, reserved for the Levantine and her children; and there, in the laundry, which must have been next to the nursery—for she heard the children's voices—she was left to wait alone, her basket on her knees, till her Bernard returned, or her daughter-in-law woke up, or her grandchildren came to kiss her. The sad spectacle which she witnessed here was the best calculated to give her an idea of the disorder reigning in a house where the servants are left to themselves, and a woman's active superintendence and foresight are wanting; the large cupboards were

wide open; the linen heaped up confusedly, in irregular, bulging, tumbling piles; the cambric sheets and tablecloth of Saxony damask lay crushed and crumpled; the locks did not shut, because of some piece of embroidery which was out of its place and which nobody took the trouble to pick up. And yet how many servants passed through this room! Negresses, their hair in yellow handkerchiefs, would hurriedly snatch up a napkin, or an apron, and carelessly trample the rich linen which lay about—one had dragged with her flat feet, as far as the door, some lace ruchings, unsewn from a petticoat, which a maid had laid aside, with her thimble here and her scissors there, as if she intended soon to resume her work.

Jansoulet's mother had remained a semi-rustic woman, and therefore all this disorder shocked her very much; for our provincial women have for the linen cupboard a kind of respect and affection which becomes a mania,

which impels them to add one piece of linen to another, till the piles rise up to the summit. And, if you examine the contents, you will find the coarse linen—relics which mark the early period of privation and struggling—and as time goes by and comfort comes, you see the linen increasing in quantity, and improving in quality, each step made towards comfort thus leaving its impress in the cupboard. And remember, that old Madame Jansoulet never left her distaff from morning till evening. If the careful housewife felt indignation at the sight which met her eyes here, the spinster could have cried before such a profanation. At last, unable to stand it any longer, she rose from her chair, heart-sick and losing all patience, and, bending down, her little shawl getting out of its place with every motion she made, she began to pick up, smooth and fold, with great care, that splendid linen, as she used to do on the lawns of Saint-Romans, on one of those great washing days, with twenty women around her, the

great wicker baskets filled to overflowing with white floating linen, and the sheets waving and flapping on the long stretched ropes in the morning air. She was absorbed in that occupation, and had forgotten her journey, Paris, and even the place where she was, when a stout man, squat and hairy, in patent leather boots and a tight-fitting velvet coat, which showed admirably his bull-like shape, made his appearance in the laundry.

'Hallo! Cabassu.'

'You here, Madame Françoise! What a surprise!' answered the shampooer, opening wide his eyes, like the giaour of a timepiece.

'Yes, my good' Cabassu, here I am. I have only just arrived; and you see I am at work already. It made my heart bleed to see all that mess.'

'I suppose you came for the sitting?'

'What sitting?'

'Why, the great sitting in the Chamber. It is to-day that——'

'No, indeed. What is the sitting to me? I should not understand one word of it. No, I came because I wished to see my little grandsons, and I was getting uneasy. I have written several times, and never received any answer. I was afraid one of the children might be ill, or Bernard's business getting on badly, or something wrong somewhere. In short, I felt anxious, and so I came. But they are all well, I am told?'

'Yes, Madame Françoise, they are all very well, thank God.'

'And Bernard?—and his business? Is it all getting on as he wishes?'

'Oh! you know, we all have our little troubles in this world—but I should say he has no reason to complain.—But, now I think of it, you must be hungry. I'll order you something to eat.'

He was going to ring the bell, being far more at home here than the old mother; but she stopped him.

'No, no. I do not want anything. I have still some provisions left from my journey.'

She drew out of her basket two figs and a crust of bread, which she placed on the edge of the table, and, while eating, went on:

'And you, my little man, what are you doing? You are a little better trimmed up than the last time you came to Bourg-Saint-Andéol. What fine linen—what splendid clothes! What are you?'

'Professor of shampooing,' answered Aristide gravely.

'You, a professor!' said she, in respectful wonder.

But she did not dare to ask him what sort of thing that shampooing was, which he taught; and Cabassu, who felt slightly embarrassed by that cross-examination, hastened to change the conversation.

'Shall I fetch the children?' he asked. 'They don't know their grandmother is here.'

'Oh! I did not wish to disturb them from

their studies. But I think their work is over now. Listen——'

Behind the door was heard that chafing, stamping impatience of children longing to be out in the fresh air. The old woman enjoyed that noise, which increased her motherly wishes to see them, and at the same time prevented her from doing anything to hasten the moment of the interview. At last the door opened. First came the tutor, an *abbé* with a pointed nose and prominent cheek-bones, whom we caught a glimpse of before, at the public breakfast-table of former days. The ambitious priest had quarrelled with his bishop and left the diocese, and in his precarious position, being henceforth one of the 'irregulars' among the clergy—for there are Bohemians in the church also—he was happy to teach the young Jansoulets, who had lately been expelled from the Bourdaloue College.

With that solemn, arrogant air of a man overwhelmed with responsibility, which must

have been that of the great prelates who had the care of the Dauphins' education, he preceded three little curly fellows, who wore gloves, round hats, short jackets, a leather bag slung across the shoulder, and long red stockings, drawn halfway up their legs, as thin as those of nearly all growing children are. Theirs was the costume of perfect velocipedists on the point of starting.

'My boys,' said Cabassu, the familiar of the house, 'this is Madame Jansoulet, your grandmother. She has come to Paris on purpose to see you.'

They stopped in a line, in the order of their sizes, eyeing with astonishment that chapped old face, the yellow strings of her cap, her strange dress, and that simplicity hitherto unknown to them. The astonishment of their grandmother was equal to theirs; but she felt, moreover, a sickening disappointment, a strange sort of embarrassment, before those stiff little gentlemen, as distant as the marquises, the

counts, and prefects whom her son used to bring with him to Saint-Romans.

Their tutor told them to go and 'salute their venerable grandmother.' They came forward, each in his turn, and formally offered their hands, just as they used to do in the attics of the poor; for the ashy face of the good woman, in her clean but simple dress, reminded them of the charity visits they had so often paid, when at the Bourdaloue College. Between them and her, there was a feeling of strangeness, a gap which no remembrance, no words spoken by the parents had ever filled up in the boys' hearts. The *abbé* felt that coldness, and tried to remove it by means of a little speech, which he delivered at the top of his voice, violently gesticulating, like a man who always fancies he stands in the pulpit, ten steps higher than those he addresses.

'Well, Madame, the day has come at last, that great day when Monsieur Jansoulet is to confound his enemies: *Confundantur hostes mei*,

quia injuste iniquitatem fecerunt in me—because they have unjustly persecuted me.'

The old mother bent piously under that volley of church Latin which passed over her head, but her face assumed a vague expression of uneasiness, at the idea of enemies and persecutions.

'Those enemies are powerful and numerous, my noble lady,' continued he, 'but let us not alarm ourselves overmuch. Let us have confidence in the decrees of heaven, and in the justice of our cause. God is on the side of justice, and it shall not be shaken. *In medio ejus non commovebitur.*'

A gigantic negro, covered with new gold lace, interrupted him, by coming in and announcing that the velocipedes were ready for the daily lesson on the Tuileries terrace. Before going, the children once more shook, with great solemnity, the wrinkled and callous hand of their grandmother, who watched them going, stupefied and very sad. All at once, by a

delightful and spontaneous impulse, when the youngest child arrived at the door, he turned round quickly, pushed aside the tall negro, and rushed, head foremost, like a young buffalo, right against the petticoats of the old woman, whom he pressed in his arms, holding meanwhile his smooth forehead, covered with dark curls, for her to kiss, with the gracefulness of a child who offers his caress as he would a flower. Perhaps that boy, younger than the others, remembered the nest and its warmth, the women who had lulled him to sleep on their bosoms with their patois lullaby; perhaps he felt, coming from that old heart to his own little heart, the motherly affection of which the Levantine had deprived him. Taken aback by that instinctive embrace, the old granny was so moved that all her body trembled.

'Oh! my darling boy, my darling little boy,' said she, as she took in her hands that silky and curly head which reminded her of another,

and kissed it passionately. After that, the child freed himself, and ran away without saying a word, his hair all moist with hot tears.

When she was alone with Cabassu, the mother, whom that kiss had comforted, next inquired what the priest meant. Had her son so many enemies?

'Oh!' said Cabassu, 'it is perfectly natural, in his position——'

'But still, what did he mean by that great day, and that sitting, about which you are all speaking?'

'Well, to-day is the day that we shall know whether Monsieur Jansoulet is a *député* or not.'

'What do you mean? Is he not yet a *député*? And I have said he was, everywhere in the country—and more than a month ago, I illuminated all Saint-Romans. They made me tell a falsehood, then?'

The shampooer had much difficulty in explaining to her all the parliamentary formalities

requisite to validate an election. She listened with one ear only, and walked feverishly up and down the laundry.

'And my Bernard is there now, at this very moment, is he?'

'Yes, Madame.'

'And can the women go in?—and if they can, how is it that his wife is not there? I can very well understand that this is an important thing for him. He wants, on a day like this, to feel all those he loves at his side. Do you know, my boy, you shall take me to "his" sitting. Is it far?'

'No, it is quite near here. Only it must have begun already. Besides,' added he, rather embarrassed, 'this is the time when Madame requires my services.'

'Ah! Do you teach her that thing of which you say you are a professor—what do you call it?'

'Shampooing. It has come down to us from the ancients. There, she is ringing her

bell. They will come and fetch me immediately. Shall I tell her that you are here?'

'No, no. I had rather go there immediately.'

'But you have no card to go in.'

'Oh! I shall tell them that I am Jansoulet's mother, and that I come to see my son tried.'

Poor mother! She little thought how true she spoke.

'Wait one moment, Madame Françoise. At least let me find somebody to show you the way.'

'Oh, you know, I don't like servants. I never could get on with them. I have got a tongue in my mouth. There are people in the streets. I am sure I can find my way there alone.'

He made one more effort to dissuade her, without however discovering all his thought.

'Take care. His enemies are going to speak against him in the Chamber. You are sure to hear unpleasant things.'

You should have seen the serene smile of faith and maternal pride, as she answered:

'Don't I know my child better than them all, and how much he is worth? Could anything make me forget that? I should be a very ungrateful woman, then. I am going. Good-bye!'

And giving a good shake to her cap, she went.

Straight and upright, proudly holding up her head, the old woman made long strides along the arcade which she had been told to follow, somewhat confused by the incessant rolling of carriages, and by the want of that faithful distaff which for fifty years had never left her during her walks. The idea of great enmities and persecutions, the mysterious words of the priest, and the reticence of Cabassu, agitated and frightened her. These things explained the forebodings which she had had, and which had torn her away from her habits, her duties, the care of the Château, and her sick

son. There was, besides, a strange thing taking place in her; ever since fortune had thrown, over her son's shoulders and her own, that heavy mantle with golden folds, old Madame Jansoulet, not being able to get accustomed to it, was expecting every moment that all those splendours would suddenly disappear. Who knows if this was not the beginning of the calamity which she dreaded? All at once, in the middle of those gloomy thoughts, the remembrance of the childish scene which had just taken place, of the little fellow rubbing himself against her drugget petticoat, brought on her withered lips a tender smile, and she murmured, delighted, in her own patois:

'Oh! the darling little fellow, the darling!

A magnificent place, immense, dazzling with light; two streams of water scattered away in silver dust; a large stone bridge, at the end of which stood a square building with statues in front; a gate, before which was a row of car-

riages, and people coming in, and small knots of policemen.—That was the Chamber. She made her way through the crowd and walked to a high glass door.

'Your card, my good woman?'.

The good woman had no card, but she simply told one of those ushers with red lappets who kept watch at the door:

'I am Bernard Jansoulet's mother. I come for my boy's sitting.'

It was indeed her boy's sitting; for in the crowd which was besieging the doors, filling the lobbies, the Chamber, the galleries, all the palace in fact, his name alone was whispered, accompanied with smiles and curious anecdotes. A great scandal was spoken of as likely to occur. The reporter had terrible revelations to make, smarting under which this barbarian brought to bay would no doubt commit himself to some act of violence. Hence this crowd, as thick as at a 'first night' in one of the theatres, or at a court of law when some *cause célèbre* is being

tried. The old mother would certainly have failed in her endeavours to be present, had it not been for the trace of gold which the Nabob left everywhere on his passage, and which smoothed the way for her. She followed one of the ushers on duty in that maze of passages, folding doors, bare and resounding rooms, filled with a humming noise, which circulated with the air of the building, and leaked from its walls, as if the very stones had been impregnated with 'speech,' and added the voices of their old echoes to all these human voices.

As she was crossing one of the lobbies, she noticed a dark little man who was gesticulating and addressing the attendants on duty in the following strain:

'Tell *Moussion* Jansoulet that I am the mayor of Sarlazaccio, and that I have been condemned to five months' imprisonment for his sake. That was surely worth a card for the sitting, per Bacco!'

Five months' imprisonment for her son's

sake! Why so? Very uneasy, her ears buzzing, she reached at last a landing where different inscriptions, '*Tribune du Sénat, du Corps Diplomatique, des Députés*,' surmounted little doors like those of a furnished house, or of the boxes of a theatre. She went in, and at first saw nothing but four or five rows of benches full of people; presently, she noticed opposite her, but far away, and separated from her by a vast empty space, other galleries, full also. She leant against the partition, astonished to find herself there, dazzled, deafened. A whiff of hot air which blew into her face, a hum of voices which seemed to rise, attracted her down the slope of the estrade, towards a species of gulf, wide open in the midst of the vessel, and where her son was, no doubt. How she wished she could see him!

Making herself still thinner, opening to herself a way with her elbows, as pointed and as hard as spindles, she glided down between the wall and the benches without taking notice

of the little bursts of anger which accompanied her, and the scornful exclamations of women whose lace and spring toilets she crumpled on her passage; for the assembly was altogether elegant and fashionable. The old lady could even recognise, by his stiff shirt-front and aristocratic nose, the handsome Marquis who had visited at Saint-Romans, and who bore so well his name of Monpavon, which is also that of the splendid bird, the peacock. He, however, did not look at her. Having thus gone a few rows forward, she was stopped by the enormous back of a man, who sat blocking up the way, and prevented her from going further. Fortunately, from her present place, in stooping down a little, she could survey nearly all the Chamber. Those benches, rising in a semicircle, where the *députés* were crowding, the green hanging all round the room, and the chair at the farthest end, occupied by a bald, severe-looking man, produced upon her, under the subdued grey light falling from above, the impression of

a school-room, just before the lesson, full of the talk and bustle of the noisy scholars.

One thing struck her. All the heads were turned in the same direction, and the looks fixed on the same point. Obeying that impulse of curiosity which all the assembly followed—the Chamber as well as the galleries—she saw that what they were all looking at was—her son.

In that part of the country where the Jansoulets came from, in some old churches, you may see, behind the choir, halfway up in the chancel, a stone cage, where the leper was allowed to listen to the service, showing to the curious and timid crowd his dark outlines, like those of a wild beast crouching against the balustaria opened in the wall. Françoise remembered very well having seen, in the village where she had been brought up, the leper, the terror of her childhood, hearing mass from the recess of his stone cage, lost in the shadow—the reprobation of his fellow-men.

When she saw her son, his head buried in

his hands, alone on the highest bench, separated from the others, that memory of the past rose in her mind. 'He looks like the leper,' murmured the peasant woman to herself. Yes, he was a leper, that poor Nabob, in whom the millions he had brought from the East had inoculated a terrible, mysterious, outlandish disease. The bench where he had chosen his place was accidentally empty, partly owing to leaves of absence, and partly to a few recent deaths; so that whilst the other *députés* conversed together, laughed and beckoned to each other, he remained alone and silent, the cynosure of all eyes; and the old mother guessed that the attention vouchsafed to him was unkind and ironical. Ah! if she could only let him know that she was there, near him, that a faithful heart was beating not far from his! But he avoided turning towards the gallery where she stood; it was as if he felt it hostile to himself, and feared to see something saddening in it. Suddenly the president's bell was

heard. The assembly was hushed. All heads bent forward by a motion expressive of attention. Not a muscle moved upon all those faces. A thin man in spectacles stood up in the midst of all those sitting people; and his motion and attitude seemed to endow him with authority.

He opened the copy-book which he held in his hand, and said:

'Gentlemen, I come in the name of your third committee to propose to you to annul the election of the second circumscription of Corsica.'

In the great silence which followed this phrase, meaningless to the old mother, the big man who sat in front of her began to breathe heavily; and all at once, in the first row of the gallery, a delightful woman's face turned towards him to make a rapid sign of intelligence and satisfaction. Her forehead was pale, her lips were thin, her eyebrows too black for the white bonnet which she wore. All that

produced upon the eyes of the good woman, without her knowing why, the painful effect of a flash of lightning at the commencement of a storm, when the dread of the thunderbolt follows the swift rush of the electric fluid. Le Merquier was reading his report. The slow, unimpassioned, monotonous voice, the Lyons accent, drawling and nerveless, and the long stature of the barrister, swaying to and fro with a movement of his head and shoulders, like that of a caged animal, produced a strange contrast with the fierce clearness of the charges which he brought forward. First of all he gave a short account of the electoral irregularities. Never had universal suffrage been treated with such primitive and barbarous want of ceremony. At Sarlazaccio, where Jansoulet's adversary would probably have had a majority of suffrages, the ballot-box was destroyed during the night which preceded the counting of the votes; something very similar had taken place at Lévie, at Saint-André, at Avabessa. The mayors themselves

committed these ruthless deeds. They carry away the urns to their houses, break the seals, and, under the cover of their municipal authority, tear up the voting papers. No respect for the law. Fraud, intrigue, and even violence, are found everywhere; at Calcatoggio, an armed man stood all the time at the window of an inn, his carbine in his hand, facing the town hall; and every time a voter of Sébastiani —Jansoulet's adversary—showed himself on the square, the man aimed at him and shouted: 'If you go in, I'll shoot you.' We see police magistrates, justices of the peace, and inspectors of weights and measures, become electoral agents, and either persuade or frighten the population, who are at the mercy of all these petty and tyrannical influences. Is not this the proof of the most boundless license? Priests even, holy pastors, carried away by their zeal for the poor box and the repairs of their indigent fabrics, have waged a veritable crusade in favour of Jansoulet's election. But a still

more powerful though less respectable influence has been brought to play in favour of the 'good cause'—the influence of the brigands. 'Yes, brigands, gentlemen; I am not joking'—and thereupon a rough sketch of Corsican brigandage in general, and the Piedigriggio family in particular.

The Chamber listened attentively, but with a certain uneasiness. After all, this was an official candidate whose manœuvres were thus denounced; and those strange electoral manners were those of a privileged country, the cradle of the Imperial family, and were so intimately connected with the destinies of the dynasty, that an attack against Corsica seemed to reach the sovereign himself. When, however, they saw, on the ministerial bench, the new Minister of State, Mora's successor and enemy, looking quite happy that one of the deceased's creatures should be thus checkmated, and smiling with much complacency at Le Merquier's cruel *persiflage*, all stiffness and uneasiness vanished;

and the ministerial smile, reflected on three hundred faces, soon expanded into a broad, hardly-constrained laugh—the laugh of crowds kept under control by the master's whip, but ever ready to burst out at the least sign of the master's approbation. In the galleries, not usually spoiled by very picturesque speeches, but which were now amused by these bandits' stories as much as by a sensational novel, there was a general feeling of merriment, and a joyful animation spread upon the faces of the women, happy to appear pretty, without profaning the solemnity of the place. The plumes and flowers of all the pretty bonnets quivered with emotion, round arms encircled by gold bracelets leant in an attitude which betokened attention. The severe Le Merquier had enlivened the sitting with the fun of the stage, with that little sprinkling of comicality, which charity concerts allow themselves to attract the profane.

Unmoved and cold in the midst of his suc-

cess, Le Merquier continued to read with his doleful voice, penetrating like Lyons rain:

'Now, gentlemen, we may be permitted to inquire how a stranger, a Provençal just returned from the East and absolutely ignorant of the wants of that island where he had never set foot before the election, a true type of what the Corsicans contemptuously call a "Continental" —how such a man, I say, has managed to excite such enthusiasm, a devotion carried to the verge of crime and profanation? In his possession of boundless wealth we find the answer to this enigma—we find it in his gold, scattered about among the electors, forced into their pockets with a shameless effrontery of which we have a thousand proofs.' Then followed the endless series of denunciations: 'The undersigned Croce (Antoine) bears testimony, in the interest of truth, to the fact that the Police Magistrate Nardi came one evening to our house, and told me: "Listen, Croce (Antoine), I swear by the flame of that lamp, that if you

vote for Jansoulet you shall have fifty francs to-morrow morning;"' and this one: 'The undersigned Lavezzi (Jacques Alphonse) declares that he rejected with scorn seventeen francs, which the mayor of Pozzo Negro offered him to vote against his cousin Sébastiani.' It is highly probable that for three francs more, Lavezzi (Jacques Alphonse) would have pocketed his scorn in silence. But the Chamber did not inquire into those details.

A holy indignation swayed that incorruptible Chamber. It stirred uneasily on its soft velvet benches; it growled, it roared. There went up 'Oh's' of indignant astonishment, eyes opened like circumflex accents, *députés* drew themselves up in virtuous protest, or sank down in utter consternation and dismay, as sometimes happens before the spectacle of human degradation. But you will notice: that most of the said *députés* had made use of the same electoral manœuvres, that in the Chamber were to be found the heroes of those famous *rastels*,

—open-air orgies, where calves, decked out with ribbons and flowers, were walked about, as they are at those abundant Kermesses worthy of Gargantua. The most guilty were precisely those who shouted the most. They turned angrily towards the high and solitary bench, where the poor leper listened, motionless, his head sunk in his hands.

Yet, in the midst of the general hue and cry, one voice was raised in his defence, but toneless, inexperienced, not so much a speech as a sympathising sputtering of words, amidst which were vaguely heard: 'great services rendered to the Corsican population—considerable works —*Caisse Territoriale.*'

The sputterer was a very small man in white gaiters, with the head of an Albino, and a few disconnected tufts of bristling hair upon his face. But the interruption of that awkward friend only provided Le Merquier with an easy and natural transition. A hideous smile parted his flabby lips: 'The honourable Monsieur

Sarigue has mentioned the *Caisse Territoriale*; we will endeavour to answer him.' Indeed, Paganetti's lair seemed very familiar to him. In a few clear and spirited sentences, he threw light into the farthermost recesses of that den, showed all its snares and its traps, its mazè and abysses, like a guide who waves his torch above the *in pace* of some dismal dungeon. He spoke of the sham quarries, the railways projected but never even begun, the imaginary steamers, vanished in their own smoke. The frightful desert of Taverna was not forgotten, nor the old Genoese tower, where were situated the Offices of the Steamboat Company. But that which most amused the Chamber was an account of an extravagant ceremony, gone through by the Governor, on the occasion of a tunnel being opened through Monte Rotondo—a gigantic work which had been projected years before, and put off year after year, which required millions of money, thousands of hands, and which had been commenced in great pomp a

week before the election day. The report related the thing with much comicality—the first blow of the pickaxe given by the candidate, into the enormous mountain covered with centenarian trees, the prefect's speech, the blessing of the flags amid cries of '*Vive Jansoulet!*' and two hundred navvies setting to work on the spot, and working day and night for a whole week; but, the election once over, the work had been abandoned, and fragments of rock left as they stood, around a ludicrous excavation, which becomes one more lurking-place, added to the many others with which the land is covered, where the prowlers of the *maquis* can quietly lie in wait for their prey. The trick was played. After having so long extracted the shareholders' money, the *Caisse Territoriale* had, for once, served to extort the votes of the population.

'Gentlemen,' continued the barrister, 'I have to mention a last detail, which I might have given you at first, and thus spared your feelings the harrowing picture of this electoral leger-

demain. I understand that a judicial inquiry has been commenced this very day into the transactions of the *Caisse Territoriale*, and that a serious examination of its books will probably reveal one of those financial scandals—alas! too frequent in our times—with which, for the sake of your own honour, you will not wish that any member of this Chamber should be connected.

After this sudden revelation, the reporter stopped one moment, like an actor who makes a pause to invite applause; and in the dramatic silence which weighed upon the assembly, was suddenly heard the slamming of a door. It was the governor, Paganetti, who was hastily leaving the gallery, his face livid, his eyes glaring with terror, his lips pouting like those of a clown who scents in the air some formidable blow of the lath. Monpavon remained motionless, expanding his shirt-front. The fat man panted violently behind the plumes of his wife's white bonnet.

The old mother was looking at her son.

'I have mentioned the honour of the Chamber, gentlemen; let me add a few words on that subject——'

Now Le Merquier had ceased reading. After the reporter, the orator, or rather the Grand-Justiciary, made his appearance. His face was impassible, his eyes sheltered behind his spectacles, and nothing lived or moved, in that long body, but his right arm—that long angular arm in a short sleeve—which rose and fell mechanically, like a sword of justice, and completed each period with the cruel and inexorable gesture of a decapitation. And there could be no mistake: it was a real execution at which they were assisting. The speaker was willing enough to put on one side scandalous reports, the mystery which surrounded that colossal fortune, acquired in distant countries, out of the reach of any possible control. But there were, besides, in the candidate's life, certain points difficult to clear up, certain details—here the good man hesitated, seemed to choose, to sift

his words; but he soon gave it up, finding it impossible to put the charge in decent language.

'Let us not disgrace this debate, gentlemen —You understand me.—You know the infamous rumours—I wish I might say slander— to which I allude. But truth forces me to declare that when Monsieur Jansoulet was called before your third committee, and invited to clear up the imputations directed against him, so vague and unsatisfactory were his explanations, that, though we remained persuaded of his innocence, a scrupulous care for your honour made us reject a candidate over whose reputation brooded such suspicions as these. No, that man cannot take his seat among you, gentlemen. Besides, what good could he do here? He has lived so long in the East that he has forgotten the laws, the manners, and usages of his own country. He believes in swift justice, in bastinadoes inflicted in the streets; he relies upon the abuse of power, and,

what is still worse, upon the venality and cringing corruption of all men. He is the type of those upstart millionnaires who fancy that everything is venal—provided a sufficient price is offered—even the electors' votes, and the conscience of his colleagues.'

You should have seen the innocent admiration of those good, fat *députés*, made torpid by comfort, as they listened to this ascetic barrister, this man of a primitive cast. He reminded them of St. Jerome, coming from his distant desert, and denouncing, withering, in an assembly of the later Roman Empire, the shameless luxury of unfaithful trustees and extortioners. Now they understood the full meaning of that fine name, 'My conscience,' given him by his colleagues in the Courts of Justice, where he towered with his high stature, and which he awed with his inflexible oratory.

In the galleries the enthusiasm was great indeed. Pretty little heads bent forward to look at him, and drink in his words; there

arose a hum of approbation, and bouquets of all colours were waved towards him—as are waved the ears of a field of corn by the passing breath of the wind. A woman's voice was even heard crying out, with a slight foreign accent, 'Bravo, bravo!'

And the old mother?

Motionless, attentive, and anxious, she tried to understand something in that legal phraseology, in those mysterious innuendoes, and stood there like those deaf-and-dumb persons, who guess what is said before them from the mere motion of the lips and the expression of the faces. And it sufficed her to look at her son and Le Mèrquier, to understand what wounds the one was inflicting on the other, what perfidious and envenomed intentions fell from that long speech on the unfortunate man, who would have seemed asleep, had it not been that his strong shoulders trembled, and his hands quivered over his face, which he hid, and among his hair, which he tore furiously. Why could she

not, from her place, cry out to him : ' Fear not, my son. If they despise you, your mother loves you. Let us go together. We have no need of those men ! ' One moment she might have believed that the words she addressed to him in the depths of her heart had, by a mysterious dispensation, found their way even to him. He arose, shook his frizzled hair, his bloodshot face, and moved his lips, trembling with suppressed tears. But, instead of leaving his bench, he held on to it, and his big hands grasped his desk convulsively.

The other had done. It was now his turn to answer :

' Gentlemen,' said he.

He stopped immediately, frightened by the rough, hoarse, and terribly vulgar sound of his own voice, which he heard now for the first time in public. During this pause, his features worked nervously. He tried to find a proper utterance, but unsuccessfully. He must first recover strength for his defence. But if that

poor man's anguish was horrible to witness, the poor mother, bending forward in the gallery, panting, gasping, nervously moving her lips, as if to find words for him, presented a perfect counterpart of his own tortures. He could not see her, in the position in which he stood, intentionally avoiding to look at that gallery; but that maternal breath, the burning magnetism of those black eyes, at last produced their effect. His tongue and limbs were once more loosed:

'In the first place, gentlemen, I declare to you that I am not about to defend my election. If you think that electoral manners and usages have not always been the same in Corsica, and that all the irregularities committed there must be charged to the corrupt influence of my gold, and not to the wild impassioned nature of the people, well then, cancel my election; it will be just, and I shall not murmur. But, in the speech you have just heard, there is something else than my election. Charges have been made which attack my

honour, question it; and it is that only I wish to answer.'

His voice became firmer, and though it was still harsh and husky, it had a sympathetic ring, due to the violent emotion under which he laboured.

He briefly related his life, his first steps in the world, his departure for Tunis. It sounded like one of those old accounts of the eighteenth century, where we are told of Barbary corsairs sweeping the Latin seas, of Beys, of bold Provençals, as brown as crickets, who always end by marrying some sultana or other, and 'taking the turban,' as the old Marseilles phrase has it.

'I,' said the Nabob, with his good-natured smile, 'I had no need of taking the turban in order to get rich. I had nothing else to do but bring into those countries of ignorance and let-things-alone, the industry and litheness of a Southern Frenchman; and I succeeded in making in a few years one of those colossal

fortunes which can only be made in those strange tropical countries where everything is gigantic, precocious, out of all proportions; where flowers grow in one night, and one tree becomes a forest in no time. The only way of obtaining pardon for such fortunes is to make a good use of them; and I have the pretension to believe that never did a favourite of chance try harder than I to obtain pardon for his wealth. Alas! I have not been successful.'

No, the poor fellow, he had not succeeded! For so much gold foolishly scattered about, he had gathered nothing but contempt and hatred —Hatred! No one had ever stirred so much hatred in his life. It was like the slime which a big boat stirs in a river when its keel touches the bottom. He was too rich, and that was imputed to him as a vice, as all vices, all crimes; *that* singled him out for anonymous vengeance, cruel and incessant enmities.

'Gentlemen,' exclaimed the poor Nabob,

lifting up his clenched hands, 'I have known misery, wrestled against it in a long, hand-to-hand struggle—a terrible struggle, I assure you. But to wrestle against riches, to defend one's honour, happiness, and repose, badly protected by the piles of gold which crumble down and crush you—*that* is far more hideous, far more sickening! Never in the most gloomy days of my distress have I suffered such pain, anguish, and insomny, as those which fortune has brought on me. That horrible fortune! I hate it—it is strangling me. People call me the Nabob, in Paris—Nabob is a wrong name. It is the Paria they should call me—a social paria, stretching wide his arms to a society which rejects him.'

Written down, these words may appear cold; but there, before the Assembly, the defence of that man appeared stamped with eloquent and majestic sincerity. It astonished, at first, coming from that lowborn parvenu, an uneducated, unlettered man, with the voice of

a Rhône bargeman and the manners of a street-porter; but, presently, it stirred the hearts of his audience by its wild and savage energy, perfectly foreign to parliamentary eloquence. Symptoms of favour had already appeared on those benches, only accustomed to monotonous and colourless ministerial statements. But at that cry of rage and despair, uttered against wealth, by the wretched being whom wealth held in its meshes, carried away and drowned in its golden waves, who struggled for very life, and called out for help from the bottom of his Pactolus, the whole Chamber started to its feet like one man, and cheered with enthusiasm. Hands were stretched towards the unfortunate Nabob, as if to give him those tokens of esteem for which he longed so much, and save him at the same time from the impending wreck.

Jansoulet felt all this. He was comforted and warmed by the sympathy of his colleagues, and when he resumed his speech it was with a bold look and erect head:

'You have been told, gentlemen, that I was unworthy to take my seat amongst you; and, indeed, he who said those cruel words was the last from whom I might have expected them; for he alone knows the painful secret of my life, and alone might have spoken in my favour, justified me, and persuaded you. He refused to do so. Well then, I will try and do it, at any cost. Abominably libelled before my country, I owe it to myself, to my children, thus publicly to clear my character, and I do it.'

He quickly turned round towards the gallery where he knew that his enemy was, watching him; but all at once he stopped, full of terror. There, straight before him, behind the small, pale, rancorous head of the Baroness, stood his own mother, that mother whom he believed two hundred leagues away from the dreaded storm, turning towards him her divine face, bathed in tears, but proud for all that of the great success of her son Bernard. For it

was a real success, due to a sincere, human emotion, and which a few more words would have turned into a great triumph. Cries of 'Go on, go on' arose from every part of the Chamber, to cheer him on, and encourage him. But Jansoulet did not say a word, though very few would have sufficed for his complete justification. He had only this to say: 'Slander has wilfully ascribed the acts of another man to me. My name is Bernard Jansoulet, and the other was called Louis Jansoulet.' He had no need to say more.

But it was too much to say in the presence of his mother, still ignorant of her eldest child's dishonour—it was too much, considering the bonds of respect and solidarity which should always unite all the members of the same family.

His overwrought imagination represented to him his old father saying, 'I die of shame, my child.' And would she not also die of shame if he spoke? He turned to the smiling face of

his mother a sublime look of self-abnegation, and then, with a hollow voice, and a motion full of despair, he said:

'Gentlemen, you must excuse me; that justification is really above my strength. Order an inquiry into my life.—It is open to all who wish to know it, and all can comment on my acts.—If you do, I swear, you will find nothing in it to prevent me from taking my seat in the midst of the representatives of my country.'

The stupefaction and disenchantment were great. This reticence seemed to all those men nothing less than the sudden breaking down of matchless impudence brought to bay.

For one moment there was a stir on the benches; it was the bustle of a vote by rising, which the Nabob, in the doubtful light coming from above, stared vaguely at, as the convict from the platform of the scaffold looks down on the surging crowd below. Then, after that

century of suffering which precedes a supreme moment, the President said, amid great silence, and as simply as possible:

'The Bernard Jansoulet's election is annulled.' Never was the life of a man cut off with less solemnity, with less ado.

Old Madame Jansoulet, in her gallery, did not understand anything of those proceedings, except that the benches around her were becoming empty, and that the people rose and left. There soon remained no one with her but the fat gentleman and the lady in her white bonnet, both bending forward and looking curiously towards Bernard, who seemed also preparing to go; for he was very calmly arranging thick bundles of papers in his large portfolio. When he had done, he rose and left his place. Ah! those public men have sometimes cruel moments to pass through. Gravely, with a heavy step, he had to descend, under the looks of the whole Assembly, those steps which he had scaled up at the expense of so much trouble

and money, but down which an inexorable destiny now precipitated him.

That was what the Hemerlingues had been waiting for. To the end they followed with their eyes that humiliating, saddening exit, which gives to the rejected *député* a little of the shame and bewilderment attendant on a dismissal. Then, as soon as the Nabob had disappeared, they looked at each other with a silent smile, and left the gallery, whilst the old woman stared at them without daring to ask them for information; for her instinct warned her that these two beings were hostile to her son. And now, alone in the gallery, she listened attentively to something that was being read, thinking that it still concerned her Bernard. It was something about an election and ballot-boxes; and the poor mother, bending forward her yellow bonnet, knitting her thick eyebrows, would have heard to the end the report of Sarigue's election, if the usher on duty—the same who had brought her there—had not come

to tell her that it was all over, and that it would be better for her to go. She appeared very much surprised.

'Indeed?—is it finished?' said she, and she rose regretfully.

Then she asked in a low voice, timidly:

'Has he—has he won?'

There was so much touching *naïveté* in the question, that the usher did not even feel inclined to laugh.

'No, unfortunately, madame; Monsieur Jansoulet has not won. But why did he stop when he was in such a fair way of winning? If it is true that he had never been in Paris, and that another Jansoulet did all that he is charged with, why did he not say so?'

The old mother became suddenly very pale, and leant against the baluster of the staircase

She had understood!

The sudden reticence of Bernard when their eyes met, the sacrifice which he had made to her so simply, with that beautiful look of the

dying lamb slain on the altar, now revealed their meaning to the simple-minded woman; and at the same time, the shame of the eldest son—the best-beloved child—mingling with the disaster of the other, she felt her maternal heart doubly wounded. Whichever way she turned, there was a painful rent. Ah! yes, it was for her sake he had refused to speak. But she would not accept such a sacrifice as this. He must come back at once, and explain himself before the *députés*.

'My son? where is my son?' she asked.

'Down below, madame, in his carriage—— It was he sent me to fetch you.'

She rushed past the usher, walking hurriedly, speaking aloud, thrusting aside on her passage dark and bearded little men who were gesticulating in the corridors. After the lobby, she crossed a large circular ante-room, round which respectful footmen formed a sort of living and glittering basement to the high bare wall. From this point, the eyes saw, through the glass doors,

the outside gate, the gathered crowd, and, among other carriages, that of the Nabob. Françoise recognised, as she passed, in a knot of men, her enormous neighbour of the gallery, talking with the livid man in spectacles who had thundered against her son, and who was now receiving all sorts of congratulations and shakes of the hand. Hearing the name of Jansoulet pronounced amid mocking and self-satisfied jeers, she slackened her pace.

'After all,' said a smart fellow, with the face of a bad woman, 'he did not prove that our accusations were false.'

On hearing those words, the old woman plunged boldly into the crowd, and planting herself before Moëssard:

'What he did not say,' she cried, 'I will tell you. I am his mother, and it is my duty to speak.'

She interrupted herself to catch hold of Le Merquier—who was trying to make his escape—by the sleeve.

'But you, first of all, you, bad man, shall listen to me. What have you to say against my child? Don't you know who he is? Wait a bit, and I'll tell you.'

And turning again to the journalist:

'I had two sons, sir,' said she.

But Moëssard had disappeared. She addressed Le Merquier again:

'Two sons, sir . . .'

Le Merquier was gone.

'Oh, listen to me, somebody, I pray you,' said the poor mother, throwing her arms up, and scattering her words about to collect an audience; but all ran, melted away, skedaddled —*députés*, reporters, unknown faces, and sneerers, to whom she wished to relate her story, whether they liked it or not, not minding the indifference of those among whom she poured out her sorrows and her joys, her pride and maternal affection, expressed in a brogue full of originality and genius. And whilst she was thus bestirring herself and struggling, bewildered, her bonnet

disordered, at once grotesque and sublime—like all the genuine children of nature when they are under the emotion of a civilised drama—calling, to bear witness to the honesty of her son and the injustice of men, even the liveried servants, whose contemptuous impassibility was more cruel than all, Jansoulet, uneasy because she had not joined him, and coming to look for her, suddenly appeared:

'Take my arm, mother,' he said; 'you must not stay here.'

He said this in a voice so loud, so firm and calm, that the laughter ceased; and the old woman, suddenly appeased, supported by that strong arm on which she leant, still trembling with anger, could leave the palace between two lines of respectful spectators. Glorious and rustic pair, the millions of the son throwing their rays upon the peasant mother, like the gold shrine which surrounds the rags of a saint! They disappeared in the beautiful sun outside, carried away in their splendid, glittering coach

—a cruel irony of this great distress, a striking symbol of the frightful misery of the rich.

Both sat on the back seat, as if fearing to be seen, and at first did not speak. But as soon as the carriage had begun to move, and the Nabob ceased to see the sad Calvary whereon his honour remained gibbeted, feeling exhausted, he laid his head upon his mother's shoulder, covered it with one of the corners of the green shawl, and there, shedding a flood of burning tears, all his big body shaken with the violence of his sobs, he uttered the cry of his childhood, his patois wail when he was a wee little boy: 'Mama, mama!'

CHAPTER V.

PARISIAN DRAMAS.

Que l'heure est donc brève
Qu'on passe en aimant!
C'est moins qu'un moment,
Un peu plus qu'un rêve—

In the semi-obscurity of the great drawing-room, dressed in its summer garb, filled with flowers, the furniture muffled up in its holland covers, the chandeliers veiled in gauze, the blinds pulled down, the windows opened, Madame Jenkins sits before the piano, and tries the last melody of the fashionable composer. A few sonorous chords accompany exquisite verses; it is a melancholy *Lied*, which seems written for her full, tender voice, and the uneasy state of her mind.

Le temps nous enlève
Notre enchantement

sighs the poor woman as she feels her own emotion kindling at the sound of her voice; and whilst the notes fly away into the court, quiet as usual, where the fountain pours its water in the midst of a clump of rhododendrons, the singer interrupts herself, her hands still pressing down the notes, her eyes fixed on the music, but her look far away.

The Doctor is absent. The care of his affairs and of his health has called him from Paris for a few days; and, as sometimes happens in solitude, the thoughts of the fair Madame Jenkins have taken that serious turn, that tendency towards analysis, which sometimes renders momentary separations most fatal to the most united couples. United—alas! they have long ceased to be so. They only met at the hours of meals, before the servants, and hardly spoke to each other; unless he, the mealy-mouthed man, happened to forget himself so far as to make some brutal, unkind observation respecting her son, her age, or a

dress which did not fit her. Ever serene and gentle, she repressed her tears, accepted his treatment without complaining, and feigned not to understand him. It was not that she loved him still, after so much cruelty and contempt. No; her case was exactly as their coachman Joe had put it, that of an old woman who is anxious to be married. Hitherto, a terrible obstacle—his legitimate wife was alive—had prolonged a dishonourable situation. But now that the obstacle no longer existed, she wished to put an end to this comedy, because of André, who might any day be forced to despise his mother, and because of society, on which they had imposed for the last ten years, and where she never went without feeling her heart throb—ever dreading the day when everything should be known. Jenkins had at first answered her hints, her prayers, with empty phrases and impatient movements—'Do you doubt me? Is not our engagement sacred?

'He also alleged the difficulty of keeping

secret an act of that importance. Then he remained spitefully silent, his heart pregnant with cold rage and violent purposes. The Duke's death, and the check which his foolish vanity had suffered, had dealt the last blow to their peace; for, misfortune, which often brings hearts together when there is sympathy between them, ever completes their estrangement when that sympathy is gone. And the Duke's death was a true misfortune for Jenkins. The run after his pearls had suddenly stopped. The position of the quack doctor had been admirably set forth by old Bouchereau in the *Journal de l'Académie.* The worldlings were terrified, still paler from the effect of their fright than from the absorption of arsenic; and Jenkins had already felt the effect of that sudden veering of the wind, which gives such a terrible character to Parisian infatuation.

That was probably the reason why Jenkins had thought proper to disappear for a time from Paris, leaving it to Madame to visit at the

houses which were still open to her, in order to watch public opinion as well as to hold it at bay. This was a difficult task for the poor woman, who found, a little everywhere, the same cold and distant greeting which Madame Hemerlingue had given her. But she did not complain; she hoped that, by her conduct, she would be thought deserving of marriage, and even relied, to compass her end, on the painful bond which pity and trials, supported in common, might establish between them.

She was sought after, in society, chiefly because of her talent, of the artistic pleasure which she was enabled to dispense: for she was ever ready to lay down her long gloves and her fan upon the piano, and play some piece of her rich repertory. She worked continually, passed her afternoons in trying new music, preferring sad and difficult melodies to that modern music which ceases to be an art, becomes a science, and appeals to our fastidiousness and restlessness rather than to our feelings.

C'est moins qu'un moment,
Un peu plus qu'un rêve.
Le temps nous enlève
Notre enchantement.

A flood of raw light suddenly entered the drawing-room with the lady's maid, who brought a card to her mistress—

'HEURTEUX, HOMME D'AFFAIRES.'

That gentleman was there, and insisted on seeing Madame.

'Did you tell him the Doctor was away?'

Yes, she had told him; but it was Madame he wished to see.

'Me?'

She felt uneasy. She eyed that coarse rugged piece of pasteboard and that unknown and harsh name: 'Heurteux.' What might that be?

'Very well, show him in.'

Heurteux, the 'homme d'affaires,' or man of business, on coming from the broad daylight into the semi-obscurity of the drawing-room,

blinked, hesitated, and tried to see. She, on the contrary, distinguished very well a face that seemed made of hard wood, with grizzly whiskers and prominent jaws, one of those pettifoggers one meets in the purlieus of the *Palais de Justice*, who seem never to have been less than fifty—with something bitter about the mouth and an envious expression in the face. He carried a morocco portfolio under his arm.

He sat down on the edge of the chair which she showed him, turned his head to make sure that the servant had left the room, and coolly opened his portfolio, as if in search of some paper or other.

Seeing that he did not speak, Madame Jenkins addressed him rather petulantly:

'I must tell you, Sir, that my husband is absent from home, and that I know absolutely nothing of his affairs.'

As coolly still as before, his hand in his papers, the man answered:

'I know very well that *Monsieur Jenkins*

is away, Madame'—he laid great stress on the two words 'Monsieur Jenkins'—'I am sent to you by himself.'

She stared at him in terror.

'Sent by him!' she exclaimed.

'Alas! yes, Madame. The Doctor's position—as you are probably aware—is, for the present, very much embarrassed. Unfortunate speculations, the smash of a great financial company in which he had embarked a good deal of capital, the *Œuvre de Bethléem*, all the expenses of which he has to bear alone, have compelled him to take an energetic resolution. He sells his house, his horses, everything he possesses; and here is his power of attorney.'

He had found what he was searching for, at last—a stamped paper, full of references and words added between the lines, in which inflexible law sometimes endorses so much cowardice and hypocrisy. Madame Jenkins was going to say: 'But I was there, why did he not ask me to do all this? I should have

carried out his wishes, his orders'—but she suddenly understood it all. The cool ways of this visitor, his almost insolent bearing, threw a sudden light upon his visit. It flashed on her mind that she was one of the superfluities which were to be got rid of, together with the costly house and useless effects, and that they only waited till she had gone to have the sale.

She rose quickly from her chair; but the man kept his.

'I have a few words more to say to Madame—'

She knew already what the few more words were which he had to say. Monsieur Heurteux went on:

'—on so painful, so delicate a subject. Monsieur Jenkins has left Paris for a long time, and fearing lest you should, by following him, be exposed to the adventures, the perils of the new life he is beginning, unwilling besides to tear you away from a son to whom you are so devoted, in whose interest it would perhaps be better—'

She had ceased to hear, ceased to see him and whilst he spun out his long thready periods, the poor woman, a prey to despair, to madness perhaps, was listening to the haunting tune which sang within her, amidst the ruins of her life, just as the last image he has seen remains in the eyes of a drowning man:

Le temps nous enlève
Notre enchantement—

But, suddenly, all her pride returning:

'Stop, Sir,' she said. 'All your phrases and circumlocutions are only one more insult added to the rest. The truth is, I am bid to go —I am thrust out of doors like a menial.'

'Oh Madame, Madame! this is cruel enough already, let us not make it worse by strong words. According to the plan which he has sketched for his future life, Monsieur Jenkins separates from you; but he does so with unutterable sorrow; and the proposal I am about to submit for your approbation will be the best proof of his feelings towards you. First of all,

with respect to furniture and objects of toilet, I am authorised to allow you——'

'Enough!' she cried, rushing to the bell. And to the servant who came in answer to her call:

'I am going out,' said she. 'Quick, my bonnet, my mantle, anything—I am in a hurry.'

Whilst the things were being fetched, she said to Monsieur Heurteux:

'Everything here belongs to Monsieur Jenkins. Let him do what he likes with it. I accept nothing from him.—Do not insist, it is useless.'

The man did not insist. He had accomplished his mission, the rest mattered very little to him.

She put on her bonnet before the mirror, coolly, quietly. The maid tied her veil for her, and smoothed the jacket on her shoulders. That done, she cast a look round, like a person thinking whether she has forgotten anything

precious.—No, nothing—her son's letters were in her pocket; she never parted from them.

'Shall I order Madame's carriage?'

'No!'

She left.

It was about five o'clock. At that very moment, Bernard Jansoulet was crossing the gate of the *Corps Législatif*, his mother's arm resting on his; but however harrowing to the feelings might be the drama played yonder, this one was far more pathetic. It was more sudden, more unforeseen, and was unaccompanied by the least solemnity; it was wholly inward; it was such a drama as Paris improvises at every hour of the day, and which gives perhaps that vibration, that quiver of life, that greater activity to our nerves. The weather was splendid. The streets of these rich quarters, broad and straight like avenues, were refulgent with the already declining light, and brightened with the opened windows and flowered balconies. At the end of the street could be seen the Boulevard's

green foliage, so light, so quick with life, in the stone frame which contained it. Thither went Madame Jenkins, hurrying, all her senses aching. What a horrible fall! Rich five minutes ago, surrounded by all the comfort and respect which money could give; and now—now—nothing left! Not even a roof over her head, not even a name.—The street!

Whither shall she go? What will become of her?

At first she thought of her son. But confess her fault, blush in the presence of her respectful boy, weep before him, and thereby deprive herself of the right of being consoled! That was beyond her strength. No, no other remedy for her but *death*—the sooner the better. Her only way to avoid shame is to disappear completely. Death is the only sword which will cut certain inextricable knots. But where, how, shall she die? There are many ways of making one's exit.—As she walked, she mentally reviewed them all. Around her, life

seemed to overflow. What Paris cannot show in winter was there now—for, at this hour and in that season, the big town was airing all the wealth and elegance which it can turn out. Around the Madeleine and its flower-market, within a space limited by the perfume of carnations and roses, upon the broad footpath where beautiful ladies' trains mingled their rustling with that of the leaves, there was a little of the pleasure one finds in drawing-rooms—the promenaders seemed to know one another, and, as they passed, they exchanged smiles and discreet greetings. All at once, Madame Jenkins began to feel uneasy lest her blanched face, her anxiety and hurried step, should excite suspicion; she therefore slackened her march to a lounging pace, stopping occasionally before the shops. All the shop-fronts spoke of journeys, of the country—a light dress for the fine sand of the parks, hats surrounded with gauze as a protection against the sun of the sea-shore, fans, parasols, satchels. Her

staring eyes were fixed on those objects without seeing them. But presently, the reflection of her pale face in the bright plate-glass of a shop-window called up another picture—she saw her own image lying motionless upon a bed in a furnished house, her eyes closed with the sleep induced by opium, as heavy as lead in her head; and again, out of Paris, in the river slime, not far from a moored boat— Which was best?

She hesitated, examined, compared. Presently, having made her choice, she turned away, with the resolute motion of a woman who regretfully tears herself from the cleverly prepared temptations of the shops. As she was passing, the Marquis de Monpavon, as smart and handsome as ever, a flower in his button-hole, bowed to her in that grand style so dear to woman's vanity, raising his hat high above his upright head. She gave him in return that pretty Parisian bow, conveyed in a slight bend of the waist and the almost imperceptible motion of smiling eyes; and you would never

have thought, on witnessing that exchange of worldly politeness, in the midst of spring flowers, that the same sinister thought guided those two loungers, who had met by chance on the road which they followed in inverse directions, but which led to the same goal.

The prediction of Mora's valet respecting the Marquis had become realised: 'We may die, or be driven from power; and then, you will have to settle your accounts, and it will be terrible'—and it *was* terrible!

The former *Receveur-Général* had, with great trouble, obtained a fortnight's delay to settle with the Treasury, hoping, as a last chance, that if Jansoulet's election were confirmed, he might once more come to his help. The vote in the Assembly had just destroyed this supreme hope. As soon as he had known it, he wended his way to the club, and went straight up to his room, where his valet was waiting for him to give him an important paper, which had arrived in the course of the

day. It was a summons to the 'Sieur Louis-Marie-Agénor de Monpavon, to appear the following day before the *Juge d'Instruction.*' Was it addressed to the Auditor of the *Caisse Territoriale*, or to the former *Receveur-Général*, accused of embezzlement? In any case, the brutal form of the summons, instead of a discreet invitation, was proof enough of the gravity of the affair and the stern resolve of Justice.

The old beau had long foreseen and expected this last stroke of fortune, and made up his mind as to what he should do when it came. A Monpavon before the police-court—a Monpavon librarian at Mazas! Never! He put some order in his affairs, that is, he tore up some papers, carefully emptied his pockets, into which he then slipped a few of the objects that stood on his toilet-table, and all so calmly, so simply, that when he said to Francis, on leaving the room: 'Going to bathe—Devilish Chamber—Nasty dust'—his servant never doubted his word. Nor was the Marquis saying an untruth. His

long, terrible stay, in the dust of the Gallery, had tired him as much as two nights passed in a railway carriage; and, the idea of death mixing in his mind with the wish to wash himself, the old Sybarite resolved to go to his last rest in a bath, like What's-his-name—Thingabob—ps—ps—ps, and other famous characters of antiquity. Well, let us do him the justice to say that not one of those Stoics met death with greater tranquillity than he.

Wearing over his officer's ribbon a white camelia, with which the club's pretty *bouquetière* was wont to decorate him, he was trippingly following the Boulevard des Capucines, when the sight of Madame Jenkins troubled for one minute his serenity. He thought she was looking so young, there was such a light in her eyes, and in all her person something so piquant, that he stopped to look at her. Tall and handsome, her long black gauze dress trailing, her shoulders covered with a lace mantilla, on which depended from her bonnet

a garland of seared leaves, she passed and disappeared in a perfumed atmosphere, among other women as elegant as herself. The thought struck him that his eyes were about to close for ever on such pretty scenes, which he appreciated as a *connoisseur*; and, naturally, the old beau's spirits felt somewhat damped, and he slackened his step a little. But another sight, which met his eyes a few yards farther, restored to him all his courage.

A shabby-genteel man, who seemed ashamed of himself and afraid of the light, was crossing the Boulevard. It was old Marestang, a former Senator and Minister, so gravely compromised in the *Tourteaux de Malte* business, that, in spite of his age, his services, and the scandal of such a trial, he had been condemned to two years' imprisonment, and his name erased from the book of the Legion of Honour, of which he was a dignitary. This had taken place some time since; and the poor wretch, having had part of his time remitted, had just left his

prison, dismayed, lost, not having even wherewith to gild his moral distress, because he had had to refund the deficiency proved against him. There he stood, on the edge of the footpath, waiting to cross, until the carriages which filled the causeway had left a free passage, embarrassed by that stoppage in the most frequented part of the Boulevards, where he was obliged to stay, amidst the loungers and open carriages, full of faces well known to him. As Monpavon passed near him, he caught that timid and uneasy look which seemed at the same time to implore and dread a sign of recognition. The thought that he might one day have to humble himself thus made him wince defiantly: 'Nonsense! It is impossible!' And straightening himself up, widening his shirt-front, he went his way, more inflexibly resolute than before.

Monsieur de Monpavon is going to death! Thither goes he by the long line of Boulevards, all ablaze in the direction of the Madeleine, and treads for the last time their elastic asphalt

slowly, loiteringly, his nose in the air, his hands behind his back. Plenty of time; no hurry; he may choose his own hour. Every moment, he smiles to some one passing him, waves a little 'how-d'-you-do' with his fingers, or takes off his hat in the grand style which we have just seen. He is delighted and charmed with everything, even with the noise of the watering-carts, even with the awnings raised in front of *cafés*, which overflow with customers as far as the middle of the footpaths. The near approach of death sharpens his senses, and gives them that delicacy of perception which one notices in convalescents. He enjoys all the subtle poetical refinement of a delightful summer's evening in the heart of Paris, of a beautiful hour—the last for him—which he wishes to prolong till night comes on. That, no doubt, is the reason why he passes in front of the sumptuous establishments, where he usually takes his bath, without stopping. Nor does he stop at the *Bains Chinois*. He is too well known here. Why, the whole

of Paris would know his adventure before the evening was over. It would produce in the clubs and *salons* a scandal of very bad taste—too much noise about his death. The old Epicurean, the worshipper of '*Tenue*,' wishes to spare himself that shame. He wishes to disappear in a vague and anonymous suicide, like those soldiers who, the day after a great battle, can neither be counted among the dead, the wounded, or living; and are merely put down as 'missing.' That is the reason why he has taken such care not to keep on his person anything which might lead to the discovery of his identity, and why he seeks some distant, out-of-the-way corner of Paris, where he may find the terrible but re-assuring *fosse commune* of the poor. Already, since Monpavon began his lonely walk, the aspect of the Boulevard has changed a good deal. The crowd has become more compact, more busy and care-worn; the houses are smaller and covered with sign-boards. After he has passed the Porte Saint-Denis and Porte

Saint-Martin—under which pour continually swarms of people who live in the overcrowded *faubourgs*—the town assumes a more provincial look. The old beau knows nobody here, and feels quite sure that nobody knows him.

The shopkeepers who watch him pass with his broad shirt-front, his fine frock-coat, his slender well-turned waist, take him for some famous actor, taking his 'constitutional' upon the old Boulevard—the witness of his former triumphs—before the theatre opens.

The wind is becoming colder, the dusk casts its shadows upon distant objects, and whilst the long road continues to blaze behind him, it becomes darker with every step he makes forward—image of life, with all its sunshine behind, to him who regretfully looks back at the past. Monpavon feels as if he were entering deeper into night. A slight shudder shakes his frame, but is powerless to change his purpose; he continues to walk on with his head erect and his majestic frill bulging out.

Monsieur Monpavon is going to death! Now he penetrates into the complicated labyrinth of noisy streets, where the uproar of omnibuses mixes with the thousand snorting trades of the working city, and where the heat and smoke of steam-works mingle with the fever of a whole people struggling against hunger. The air vibrates, the gutters reek, the houses tremble under the rolling weight of carts, and heavy drays come into collision at the corners of narrow streets.

Suddenly the Marquis comes to a standstill. Between the black shop of a charcoal dealer and the workshop of a packing-case maker, opens an archway, above which projects a dull lantern with the word *Bains* written upon it. Deal planks abutting upon the walls stagger him a little; but he goes in, nevertheless, and crosses a little damp garden, where a waterspout is mournfully playing in a rockery. This is exactly the dismal corner he was in search of. Who will ever imagine that the Marquis de Monpavon came here to cut his throat?

At the end of the garden stands a low house, with green shutters, a glass door, and that spurious air of a villa which all bathing-places have in Paris. He orders a bath. They take him along a narrow passage, and, whilst the bath is being prepared, he smokes his cigar at the window, and looks at the garden, with its stunted lilacs, and the wall which surrounds it on all sides.

Adjoining the house is a large yard, the yard of the firemen's barracks, with a gymnasium in it, with masts, ladders, and porches, vaguely seen over the wall, and which remind one of gallows. A bugle sounds in the yard, and that sound sends the Marquis back to thirty years ago. It reminds him of his campaigns in Algeria, the high walls of Constantine, the arrival of Mora in the regiment, and their duels, and their parties. How beautiful life was then! What a pity those confounded cards —ps—ps—ps— Well, at all events, the '*tenue*' is safe.

'Monsieur,' says the waiter, 'your bath is ready.'

At that moment, pale and panting, Madame Jenkins was entering André's studio, whither she was led by an instinct stronger than her will. She wanted to kiss her child once more before dying. As he had given her a key, she opened the door, and walked straight in. She felt some relief on finding that he had not yet come home, and that she would have time to calm her emotion, which was still increased by her long walk, unusual to her who had hitherto counted among the rich. Upon the table was the little note which he generally left there before going out, in order that his mother, whose visits became rarer and shorter owing to Jenkins' tyranny, might know where he was, and either wait for or join him. These two beings had never ceased to love one another tenderly, deeply, notwithstanding the cruel caprices of fortune, which compelled them to introduce into their relations the

precautions and the mystery of another kind of love.

'I am at the rehearsal,' said the little note, 'and shall be back at about seven.' This attention of her boy, whom she had not visited for three weeks, and who, nevertheless, persisted in waiting for her, brought into the mother's eyes the flood of tears which were stifling her. She felt as if she had just entered a new world. Everything was so light, and calm, and pure, in this little room, which was still lighted by its glass roof, and tinged with the rays of the sinking sun! It looked like all attics—as if it had been cut into a patch of the sky. Its bare walls were ornamented by one large portrait only, her own, smiling in the place of honour; but there was another, a little one, hers still, in a gilt frame upon the table. Yes, truly, these humble lodgings, so full of light when all Paris was plunged in darkness, produced upon her a supernatural impression, notwithstanding the meanness of the spare furniture, divided between

the two rooms, notwithstanding its common chintz, and its chimney-piece, adorned with its large bouquets of bluebells—flowers which are hawked about from early morning in cartfuls through the streets.

What a good and dignified life she might have led there, near her boy! And immediately, with the rapidity of a dream, she sees her bed in one corner, her piano in another, sees herself giving lessons, bustling about in this new home, to which she brings her share of comfort and joyful courage. How was it that she had not, from the first, understood that *there* was her duty and the pride of her widowhood! What blindness, what unworthy weakness—!

It was a great error, a great mistake, no doubt; but one which might have found some sort of apology in her easy and tender nature, in the skill and knavery of her accomplice. He had all along promised her marriage, and concealed from her that he was not free; and

when, at last, he had been driven to confess, he had drawn such a picture of his dark hopeless life, of his love, that the poor creature, already compromised so gravely in the eyes of the world, too weak for one of those heroic efforts which would have raised her above her dubious position, had yielded entirely, and accepted that ambiguous existence, so brilliant and so wretched at the same time, which reposed entirely upon a lie of ten years' duration.

Ten years of inebriating success and unspeakable anxiety—ten years, during which, every time she sang in a *salon*, she was racked by the fear of a discovery—ten years, during which, the least word spoken about an irregular life, seemed to her like an insulting allusion—during which, in short, the expression of her face had acquired that look of helplessness and gentle humility, like that of a culprit craving for pardon. And later on, the certainty of being soon quitted had spoilt even those borrowed joys, and breathed a withering

breath upon her luxurious comfort. Oh, what anguish, what suffering, silently undergone, what unceasing humiliations, until the last—the most frightful of all!

Whilst she thus painfully reviews her life, in the freshness of the evening and the calm of the solitary house, ringing peals of laughter, a flow of youthful spirits, rise like a happy gust from the floor underneath. Then she remembers André's confidence, his last letter, in which he told her the great news; and she tries to distinguish, among all those pure and limpid voices, that of her daughter Elise, her son's affianced, whom she neither knows nor is ever to know. This thought, which completes the poor mother's forfeiture, adds its sting to the agony of her last moments, and she feels overwhelmed with such regrets and remorse, that, in spite of her great desire to keep up her courage to the last, she weeps—and weeps.

The night creeps on by degrees, dark patches of shadow obscure the sloping panes,

through which the deep sky is seen, colourless, lost in utter darkness. The roofs group themselves in masses for the night, like soldiers getting ready for an assault. The deep voices of the steeples sound and re-echo the hour, whilst the swallows whirl round a hidden nest, and the wind blows as usual among the rubbish in the old mason's yard. This particular evening, there is in its voice something of the moan of the sea-shore, and in its blast the cold of a damp mist. It blows from the river, as if calling the poor, wretched woman, and telling her that thither must she wend her way.

With her lace mantilla—oh! It makes her shudder beforehand. Why did she come here? Why did she again renew her taste for life—an impossible life after the confession she would have to make?

Hurried steps shake the staircase, the door opens boisterously. It is André—he sings, he is happy and in great haste, for they expect him to dinner at the Joyeuses.' A light, quick!

The lover must adorn himself! But as he rubs the matches on the box, he guesses that somebody is in the studio—a moving shadow among the silent ones.

'Who is there?'

He gets some sort of answer—perhaps a stifled laugh, perhaps a sob. He thinks that it is his little neighbours—an invention of the children, playing their pranks. He approaches—two hands, two arms embrace him, press him.

'It is I,' she says.

And with a feverish voice, talking quickly to simulate confidence, she tells him that she is going on a long journey, and that before leaving——

'A journey! Where are you going?'

'Oh! I don't know, we are going—far away—to his country—on business.'

'What! and you, not present when my drama is played? It is to be in three days—and immediately after, my marriage! Come,

mother, you must surely be present at my marriage?'

She finds excuses, invents reasons; but her burning hands in those of her son, her changed voice, make André understand that she does not speak the truth. Again he tries to light a candle, but she stops him:

'No, no, it is quite useless—we are better so; I have besides so many things to do yet—I must leave you.'

They are both standing and ready to part. But André will not let her go. She must tell him what is the matter with her, what troublous care agitates her? why her eyes—it may be an effect of dusk—shine with that wild light?

'It is nothing—oh! nothing, I assure you.—At least, it is only the idea that I can't take my share in your happiness, in your triumphs. You know, my boy, how much I love you—you cannot doubt your mother, can you? I never passed one day without thinking of you.—Think of me also—keep me a corner of your

heart—and now kiss me and let me go—I have been staying too long.'

Another minute, and she would not have had strength to accomplish what remained to do. She rushes past. Again he interposes.

'Well, no, mother, you shall not go! I feel that there is something strange now passing in your life—something that you try to conceal—I am sure you have some great anxiety, some great trouble. Has that man done you—some infamy?'

'No, no; let me go. I must go.'

But he stops her, holds her in his strong embrace.

'Come, mother, what is it? Speak—tell me.'

Then he puts his lips to her ear, and with his softest, tenderest voice, he whispers in a kiss:

'He left you, did he not?'

The poor wretch shudders, struggles.

'Ask me nothing; I will not tell you anything—farewell!'

But he, pressing her closer to his heart:

'And what could you tell me that I don't know already? Did you not understand why I left, six months ago?'

'What! You know—?'

'Everything.—What happens to-day I have long foreseen, long wished for—'

'Oh! woe to me, woe to me, wretched woman! Why did I come here?'

'Because it is your place, because you owe me ten years of my mother's life—you see that I can't let you go.' He said this on his knees, before a couch on which she had fallen, bathed in tears, and uttering the last painful cries of her wounded pride. Long did she thus weep, her boy at her feet. But now the Joyeuses, uneasy at not seeing André come down, rush up all together to fetch him. It is an invasion of innocent faces, of pure joyousness, floating curls, modest ornaments; and over this group the good old lamp sheds, beneath its large shade, all its merry beams. Old Monsieur Joyeuse it

is who carries it, with great solemnity, as upright and straight as possible, with the motion of an antique canephore. They stop speechless before the sad pale face of the lady, who looks, full of emotion, at all this smiling gracefulness, at Elise chiefly, a few steps behind the others, and whom her embarrassed attitude in this indiscreet visit betrays as her son's bride.

'Elise, kiss our mother and thank her. She will henceforth live with her children.' She is taken in all those caressing arms, pressed against those four little women's hearts who have so long felt the want of a mother. She takes her place under the luminous circle of the family lamp, which seems to widen to make room for her. Here, her eyes will soon dry, she will be comforted and warmed, and her mind will acquire strength and tone in that robust flame, which rises without flickering, though it burn in a little studio, close to the roof, where even now blew the strong sinister tempest which she must try to forget.

He who is agonising, sunk in his bloody bath, has never known that sacred flame of family love. Selfish and hard, he lived to the end for show only, exhibiting all his vanity in the broad expanse of his shirt-front; and yet, was this vanity the best part of him. It is it which kept *him* erect and straight so long, and gave him all his swagger; it is it which now tightens his lips, and makes him grind his teeth, to stifle his last gurgling breath.

In the mouldy garden, the sad waterspout continues its mournful play. The fireman's bugle sounds the evening call.

'Just go to number seven,' says the mistress; 'he stays very long in his bath.'

Up goes the attendant. He utters a cry of terror.

'Oh, Madame, he is dead! But it is not the same man.'

There is a rush. They surround him. Nobody would have known the handsome gentleman who had just come in, in that ugly

manikin, whose head hung down on the edge of the bath, in that face which is now a mixture of paint and blood—all his limbs expressing, as they lie there, a supreme weariness of the part he had played to the last, and which had ended by killing the actor.

Two strokes with a razor across the magnificent inflexible chest, and all his fictitious majesty relaxed and passed away in that nameless horror, that pool of dirt and blood, that mixture of painted and death-like flesh, where the worshipper of '*Tenue*,' the Marquis Louis-Marie-Agénor de Monpavon, lay disfigured and unrecognisable.

CHAPTER VI.

MEMOIRS OF AN OFFICE-PORTER. LAST LEAVES.

I HURRIEDLY write down in this book, with a much-agitated pen, the frightful events of which, for the last few days, I have been, so to speak, the plaything. This time it is all up with the *Territoriale* and my ambitious dreams. Protests, executions, the swoop of the police upon us, the Governor hiding somewhere, our auditor, Bois-Landry, at Mazas, our other auditor Monpavon, disappeared, mizzled away. My mind wanders amidst these catastrophes. And when I think that if I had only obeyed the dictates of cool reason, I should have been these last six months at Montbars, tilling my little vineyard—with no other care than watch-

ing the bunches of grapes getting rounder and mellower, under the influence of that good sun of Burgundy—and picking from among the vine plants, after every shower, those little grey snails, so delicious in *fricassée!* With my savings I could have built, upon the hill, at the end of my little plantation, on a spot which I can see from here, a belvedere of dry stones, like Monsieur Chalmette's, so comfortable for the afternoon siesta, whilst the quails sing everywhere about the vineyards. But it was not to be. Ever led astray by deceitful illusions, I speculated. I tried to become rich, and, by some lucky financial stroke, to tie my fortune to the car of triumphers. The result is that I have now returned to the saddest days of my history. I am again the mere office-porter of a bankrupt concern, and have to answer a herd of creditors and shareholders, mad with rage, who load my white locks with the worst abuse, and make *me*, forsooth, responsible for the Nabob's ruin and the Gover

nor's flight. Am I not as cruelly hit as any of them? Don't I lose once more my four years' arrears and seven thousand francs' advances—all, in fact, that I entrusted that scoundrel, Paganetti of Porto-Vecchio, with?

But it was written that I was to drain the cup of humiliation and disenchantment to the very dregs. Have I not had to appear before the *Juge d'Instruction*, I, Passajon, late Faculty beadle, with thirty years' faithful services and the ribbon of an *officier d'Académie*? I tell you, when I saw myself ascending that broad staircase of the *Palais de Justice*, which has no baluster to lean upon, I felt my head swim and my legs totter under me. What reflections I made while crossing those halls—black with lawyers' and judges' gowns—with their big green doors, behind which you hear the imposing noise of trials at hearing. And when I arrived upstairs, in the *Juge d'Instruction's* ante-chamber, I had to wait for a whole hour on a bench, where I felt the prison vermin

crawling up my legs, and to listen to a crowd of thieves, swindlers, and women of evil repute, wearing the St. Lazare cap, who talked and laughed with *gardes de Paris*, whilst the butt-ends of guns resounded in the passages, and the prison vans rumbled in the yard. Then I understood the danger of *combinazione*, and that Monsieur Gogo, the *Juge d'Instruction*, was not a man to be trifled with. One thing, however, reassured me, namely, that as I never took part in the management of the *Territoriale*, I was not answerable for its intrigues and jobbings.

But explain it as you like, the fact is, that as soon as I entered the *Juge's* chamber, and found myself face to face with that man in a velvet skull cap, who stared at me from the other side of the table with his small auger-like eyes, I felt myself so thoroughly penetrated, searched, and turned inside out—to the farthest recesses, to the very depth of my conscience—that, in spite of my innocence, I felt inclined to make a con-

fession. A confession of what?—I don't know; but that is the effect produced by a judicial examination. That confounded man stared at me for fully five minutes without speaking a single word, turning over, all the time, the leaves of a copy-book full of a round hand-writing which was not unknown to me.

Suddenly, he addressed me with a tone of voice at once sneering and severe:

'Well, Monsieur Passajon, how long is it since you last played the drayman's trick?'

The remembrance of certain little misdeeds, in which I had taken a part in days of distress, was already so far from me, that I did not understand him, at first; but a few words of the judge soon proved to me how thoroughly he was acquainted with the history of our bank. That terrible man knew everything, down to the least details, down to the most secret particulars.

Who could have informed him so well? Add to that, his sharp, dry tone, and, whenever

I tried to enlighten him by a few sagacious observations, an imperious way of telling me: 'None of your phrases, if you please,' all the more wounding to hear, at my age, with my reputation as a fine speaker, that we were not alone in his chamber. A clerk was sitting next to me and taking down my words; and, behind me, I heard the noise of big leaves that were being turned. The judge asked me all sorts of questions relative to the Nabob, the time when he had made his deposits, and the place where we kept our books; and all at once, addressing the person behind me, whom I could not see:

'Show the cash-book here, *Monsieur l'Expert.*'

A little man in a white cravat placed a large ledger upon the table. It was Monsieur Joyeuse, Hemerlingue & Son's late cashier; but I had no time to pay him my respects.

'Who did that?' the judge asked me, opening the ledger at a place where a page had been torn out. 'Come, Sir, tell the truth.' I could

not tell a lie, knowing nothing, and never having meddled with the books. Nevertheless I thought it my duty to mention Monsieur de Géry, the Nabob's secretary, who often came to the office during the evening, and locked himself up alone in the room where the books were kept. Thereupon the little Monsieur Joyeuse became scarlet with anger:

'That is absurd, *Monsieur le Juge d'Instruction.* Monsieur de Géry is the young man whom I mentioned to you. When he went to the *Territoriale*, his object was to ascertain how things were getting on; and he felt too much interest in that poor Monsieur Jansoulet to destroy the acknowledgments of his deposits, the proof of his blind but perfect uprightness. But Monsieur de Géry, after having long been detained at Tunis, is now on his way home, and will soon be able to furnish all necessary explanations.

I felt that my zeal was compromising me.

'Take care, Passajon,' said the judge severely

to me. 'Hitherto you have been here as a witness only, but if you try to lead justice astray, you might well come again as an accused'—And this terrible man really looked as though he meant it. 'Come, Sir, tell us who tore out this page?' Fortunately I suddenly remembered—very seasonably you will confess—that, a few days before leaving Paris, our Governor had ordered me to take the books to his private residence, where they had remained till the next day. The clerk took down my evidence on this point, after which the judge dismissed me by a sign, warning me, at the same time, that I must consider myself at his disposal, should he again require my presence.

When I had reached the door he called me back: 'Here, Monsieur Passajon, take that with you; I don't require it any more.' He gave me the papers which he had been consulting while examining me; and you may judge what was my confusion, when, on the cover, I perceived the word *Memoirs* written in my finest

roundhand. I had actually furnished arms to the court—precious information, which the suddenness of our disaster had prevented me from concealing from the police, when they swooped down upon our office. Fancy that!

My first impulse on coming home was to tear those indiscreet papers to pieces; but on second thoughts, after having ascertained that those Memoirs contained nothing which could compromise *me*, instead of destroying them, I resolved to continue them, feeling certain that I should some day or other get something for them. There are plenty of novel-writers in Paris who have no imagination, who can only patch up true stories in their books, and who, therefore, will be but too glad to buy from me this little work, replete with information. Thus I shall have my revenge on that society of distinguished swindlers, with whom, for my shame and misfortune, I found myself mixed up.

Besides, I must find occupation for my

leisure hours. There is nothing to do in the office. It is completely abandoned since the judicial investigation, and my only occupation is to pile up every day the heaps of summonses which I receive.

Now, I have begun again to keep the accounts of the second-floor cook, Mademoiselle Séraphine, from whom, in return, I accept provisions, which I keep in the strong-box, again turned into a provision-safe. The Governor's wife is also very kind to me, and stuffs my pockets with good things every time I call to see her, in her grand apartment of the Chaussée d'Antin. Nothing changed there. The same comfort, the same luxury as ever, with the addition of a little baby three months old—the seventh child—and a magnificent nurse who, with her *Caux* bonnet, excites great admiration at the Bois de Boulogne. I suppose that, when people are moving along on Fortune's rails, it takes some time before they can slacken their speed and come to a standstill. Besides, that scoundrel,

Paganetti, foreseeing what would happen, had put everything in his wife's name. That, perhaps, is the reason why that Italian woman has conceived for him an admiration which nothing can diminish. He is off, hiding somewhere; but she remains convinced, nevertheless, that her husband is as innocent as a little Saint John, a victim of his own kindness and credulity. You should hear her:

'You know him, Monsieur Passajon; you know if he is scrupulous. I tell you, as true as there is *un Dieu*, if my husband had done any of the dishonest things of which he is accused, I should be the first, do you hear, the first, to put a gun in his hands and tell him: "*Tè Tchecco!* blow your brains out.'"

And from the way in which she opens the nostrils of her little turned-up nose, and her eyes as round and black as two balls of jet, it is easy to see the little Corsican woman would have done as she says. What a clever fellow that scamp of a Governor must be, though, to have

been able to deceive even his wife, to play a comedy even in his own home, where the most clever men generally appear as they are!

In the meantime all those people make splendid dinners. Bois-Landry, at Mazas, gets his meals from the *Café Anglais*, and 'uncle' Passajon is reduced to the necessity of eating stew made from pieces collected here and there in several kitchens. Well, let us not complain too much. There are others more to be pitied than we are—Monsieur Francis, for example, who came this morning to the *Territoriale*, thin, pale, his linen in a disgraceful state, his cuffs all crumpled, though he still pulls at them by habit.

I was just broiling a good piece of bacon before the fire in the board-room, my plate, knife and fork nicely arranged on a newspaper spread out on a corner of the inlaid table, in order not to soil anything. I asked Monpavon's valet to share my frugal luncheon. But, because he served a Marquis, he fancies

himself a nobleman, and he thanked me with a dignified air which would have made you laugh, had you seen his hollow cheeks. He began by telling me that he was still without news of his master; that, for himself, he had been turned out of the Rue Royale Club; that all the papers there were under seal; and that all the creditors fell like a swarm of locusts on the few things left behind by the Marquis. 'So that you see me rather short of cash,' added Monsieur Francis. In other words, he had not a penny in his pocket, and had slept the two previous nights on the benches of the Boulevards, awakened every moment by a policeman, obliged to move on and to pretend to be intoxicated, in order to reach another shelter. As for meals, I don't think he had made one for some time past; for he cast such famished looks on my provisions, that it was really painful to see; and when I had placed before him a rasher and a glass of wine, he fell to like a hungry wolf. The blood at once rushed up to his cheeks, and without

losing a mouthful, he began to gabble and gabble:

'You know, Passajon,' said he between two mouthfuls, 'I know where he is. I saw him.'

He winked knowingly, as he said this, and I looked at him very much astonished.

'Whom do you mean, Monsieur Francis?'

'Why, the Marquis, my master—yonder in the little white house, behind Notre-Dame.'

He did not say the Morgue, because that is an ugly word.

'I was quite sure I should find him there; I went straight thither, the next day. There he was. Very well disguised, I assure you. None but his valet could have known him. His hair quite grey, his teeth gone. All his wrinkles! He looked the sixty years that he disguised so well!—Upon that marble flag, with the tap dropping its water upon him, he looked just as he used to do before his toilet table.

'And did not you say anything?'

'No; I had long known his intentions on

that point, and I let him go as he wished—discreetly. But for all that, he might have left me a morsel of bread before he went, for I served him for twenty years.'

And all at once, striking the table with his fist, in a fit of rage:

'When I think that instead of serving Monpavon I might have entered Mora's service, have had Louis' place— What chance that fellow! What a number of thousand-franc rolls he managed to get when his Duke died! And the left-off clothes!— Hundreds of shirts, a morning gown in blue-fox skin, worth twenty thousand francs if a penny!— And Noël, he, too, knew how to provide for a rainy day! He was quick about it, too, for he knew that it would not last—there are no scrapings to be had now at the Place Vendôme. The mother, who manages everything, is an old gendarme. Half of the house is to let. The game is up, there—nothing more to be done.'

I must confess that on hearing this I could

not restrain my satisfaction; for it is that wretched Jansoulet who is the cause of all our misfortunes. A man who boasted of being so rich, and said so everywhere! The public were taken by the bait, like fishes which see shining scales in the net. He lost millions, it is said. Well! grant it; but why did he make us believe he had so many others? They arrested Bois-Landry; but why did they not sooner arrest him? Ah, if we had had another expert, I am sure it would be done already—But, as I said to Francis, you have only to look at that *parvenu* Jansoulet to know exactly what he is—what a proud brigand's head!

'And so vulgar,' added the late valet.

'Not the least morality!'

'An absolute want of *tenue!*'

'Well, he is sinking,' added Francis, 'and so is Jenkins, and so are many others besides.'

'What! the Doctor, too? I'm sorry for him, such a polite, amiable man.'

'Yes, sold out too!—Horses, carriages,

furniture, everything. All round the yard, nothing but auctioneer's bills—it is as if death had passed there. The Nanterre Villa is put up for sale; there were still half a dozen young Bethlehems left, but they sent them off in a cab. The disaster is complete, I tell you, Passajon; such a disaster as perhaps we shall not see the end of, old as both of us are—complete—thorough—it's all rottenness—everything must go!'

It was an awful sight to see that old wreck of the empire, thin, broken down, all covered with mud, and crying, like Jeremiah, 'The end is come!' with a toothless mouth, all black and wide open. I was afraid and ashamed before him, and felt a great desire to see him gone. Within myself I thought: 'Oh, Mr. Chalmette! Oh, my little vineyard at Montbars!'

Same date.—Great news—Madame Paganetti came this afternoon, very mysteriously, on purpose to bring me a letter from the Governor. He is in London, getting up a magnificent

affair: splendid offices in the finest part of the city—limited liability company! He asks me to join him. 'Happy,' says he, 'to be able thus to repair the wrong which he has done me.' I shall have double the salary that I got at the *Territoriale*, with lodging, coals, five shares in the new concern, and all my arrears fully paid up. I have only to advance the money for my journey, and pay a few pressing debts in the neighbourhood. *Vive la joie!* My fortune is made. I write by this post to the notary at Montbars to mortgage my vineyard.

CHAPTER VII.

BORDIGHERA.

As Monsieur Joyeuse had informed the *Juge d'Instruction*, Paul de Géry was returning home from Tunis after a three weeks' absence; three endless weeks passed in struggling through a maze of intrigues and plots, cunningly devised by the powerful hatred of the Hemerlingues; three weeks, during which he wandered from room to room, from ministry to ministry, in that immense residence of the Bardo—a mass of buildings bristling with culverines, in which are assembled all the government offices, placed here under the eye of the master, like his stables and his harem. Paul had learnt, shortly after his arrival, that the Chamber of Justice had secretly begun an action against Jansoulet—a

ridiculous suit, lost beforehand. The warehouses of the Nabob on the marine quay were closed, seals had been put on his coffers, and his ships were solidly moored at *La Goletta*; a guard of *Chaouchs* was placed around his palaces, as if he were already dead, as if the only thing which remained to do was to divide his property.

Not a defender, not a friend, among the hungry pack! The Frankish colony seemed pleased with the fall of a courtier who had so long obstructed all the paths leading to the master's favour. There was no use in trying to tear this prey from the Bey's claws, unless the Nabob should triumph in the Assembly. All that de Géry might hope for, was to save a few strays from this wreck; and to do that, he must make haste; for he expected to hear any day of his friend's complete defeat.

He set to work, therefore, and multiplied his proceedings with indefatigable activity. Neither Eastern wheedling, nor that affected and mawkish politeness which conceals native ferocity

and looseness of morals, nor the sanctimonious smile under which indifference presents itself, nor those looks of helplessness, those crossed arms which seem an invocation to divine fatalism when human falsehood fails to produce its effect, no, none of those things could put off our friend. The coolness of that calculating little *Méridional*, who seemed to condense in himself all the exuberant qualities of his countrymen, was of as great use to him as his perfect knowledge of French law, of which the Tunisian Code is, so to speak, but a disfigured copy. By dint of patience and circumspection, and in spite of the intrigues and interest of young Hemerlingue, he succeeded in saving from confiscation part of the money lent a few months before by the Nabob to the Bey. Ten millions out of fifteen were thus rescued from Mohammed's rapacity. The very morning of the day when this sum was to be paid him, he received from Paris a despatch, informing him of his friend's 'invalidation.' He hastened to the

palace, anxious to arrive there before the news, and fortunately received drafts on Marseilles to the amount of ten millions. He had them quite safe in his portfolio, and was returning to Tunis, when, on the road, he met young Hemerlingue in his carriage, hastening to the Bardo as fast as his three mules could drive him. The thin owl's face was radiant. De Géry at once saw that if he remained but a few hours longer at Tunis his drafts would run great risk of being again confiscated; therefore, he drove straight to an Italian steamer which was to leave for Genoa on the following day, passed the night on board, and did not feel easy in his mind until he saw, far behind him, the white houses of Tunis, which rise from the shore of the bay up to the top of the rocks of Cape Carthage. As the steamer entered the harbour of Genoá, and as she was moving alongside the quay, she passed near a large yacht, on which floated the Tunisian colours, among innumerable little streamers with which she was festively decked. De Géry was

very much agitated, thinking at first that he was being followed, and that, on landing, he might be annoyed by the Italian police like a vulgar swindler. But it was not so. The yacht was riding at anchor, the sailors were cleaning the deck, and painting in red the mermaid at the prow, as if some important personage was expected. Paul did not feel any curiosity to know who that personage might be; he only crossed the marble city, and left for Marseilles by rail, following that wonderful road, along the coast, which alternately passes from the deep darkness of tunnels to the dazzling sight of the blue sea but which its narrowness exposes to so many accidents. The train stopped at Savona, where the travellers were informed that they could not go any farther, as one of those little bridges, thrown across the mountain torrents, had fallen in during the night. The engineer and workmen had been telegraphed for, but the train would probably not be able to continue the journey for some ten or twelve hours. It was

morning. The Italian town was waking up in that misty twilight which forebodes a very hot day. Whilst the travellers were scattering themselves about in the various hotels and cafés, or visiting the town, de Géry, disgusted with the delay, was endeavouring to find some way of utilising these twelve hours. He was thinking of poor Jansoulet, whose honour and life might possibly be saved by the money he was bringing him, and of his dear Aline, whose remembrance had not left him a single day during his journey, any more than the portrait she had given him. The idea struck him that his best plan would be to hire one of those *calesini*, drawn by four horses, which run between Genoa and Nice, along the Italian Cornice—an admirable journey often made by foreigners, lovers, or players who have been lucky at Monaco. The coachman guaranteed to be early at Nice; but even were he not to arrive earlier than the train, the impatient traveller would feel some relief in the motion of the journey in knowing that every

turn of the wheel diminished the distance which separated him from the goal of his desire.

Oh, for the delights of that matchless journey, with four horses carrying you along the white road of the Cornice, on a beautiful June morning, when you are young, like our friend Paul, with a heart as full of love as his!

On the left, an abyss one hundred feet deep —the waves of the rounded creeks tipped with foam, seen in the distant mist, where the blue water and the blue sky mingle with one another —red or white sails floating on the sea like single displayed pinions—outlines of steamers leaving a streak of smoke behind them by way of farewell—and, near the shore, fishermen, seen in the windings of the road, not bigger than water-birds, in their moored barques which seem so many nests. Presently the road sinks and follows a rapid slope along the rocks and perpendicular promontories, and the fresh sea breeze mingles with the bells of your team. On the right, on the slope of the mountain, you see

the pines rising one above the other, the green oaks with their capricious roots jutting out of the barren soil, and the olive-trees planted in terraces; and further, a large white flinty ravine, bordered with verdant vegetation, which reminds you of the passage of the water. The dried-up bed of the torrent is used as a road by the loaded mules, which step with their strong hoofs among the pebbles. A laundress bends over a small pool—the last drops remaining of the great winter inundation. From time to time you cross a village street, or rather a little town, grown drowsy in too much sunshine, but celebrated in story, with its houses massed together and connected by dark arcades—a network of small arched streets which climb up the almost perpendicular slope, and here and there receive a blaze of light from above. You might fancy mine shafts, at the bottom of which are perceived coveys of children—with their curls forming halos round their young faces—baskets full of splendid fruit, a woman

descending the rugged pavement, a pitcher on her head and her distaff under her arm. Then at some corner of the street, the sparkling of the blue water and the boundless sea once more in sight.

As the day wore on, the sun, rising in the sky, scattered on the sea—now cleared of its mists, heavy, drowsy, and sparkling like quartz—its sheaves of rays which fell into the water like arrows; and dazzled by their reverberation, which was intensified by the white rocks and soil, and by a strong wind which, like the African sirocco, raised spirals of dust on the passage of the carriage. Now you arrive in the warmest and best sheltered sites of the *Cornice*—a true tropical temperature, where date-trees, cactuses, and the high-branched aloes, grow in open air.

At the sight of those slender stems, of that fantastic vegetation which stood out in the hot air, on hearing the blinding dust crack like snow under his carriage-wheels, de Géry, his

eyes half closed, heavy with sleep and dreamy, in this leaden atmosphere, believed himself once more on that fatiguing road between Tunis and the Bardo—which he had so often travelled—full of that strange medley of Levantine coaches and bright liveries, of long-necked and hanging-lipped *mealiris*, of caparisoned mules, of donkeys, of ragged Arabs, of half-naked negroes, of full-dressed functionaries and their escorts of honour. Was he really about to find yonder, where the road skirts gardens of palm-trees, the fantastic and colossal architecture of the Bey's palace, and the little panes of its grated windows, and its marble porticoes, and its doors of carved wood painted in brilliant colours? No; it was not the Bardo, but pretty Bordighera, divided into two parts, like all the towns on that sea coast—the *Marine* stretching along the shore, and the upper town—connected together by a forest of silent palm-trees, with their slender stems and drooping foliage—fusees of verdure streaking the blue heaven with their thousand sprays.

The heat was unbearable, the horses were done up. The traveller was constrained to stop for a few hours in one of those great hotels, which border the road, and give, from the beginning of November, to that little town, so wonderfully sheltered, the luxurious life and cosmopolitan animation which characterise an aristocratic winter-station. But during this season of the year, nobody lived in the *Marine* of Bordighera, except a few fishermen, who remained invisible at this hour of the day. Villas and hotels seemed dead—all their blinds lowered. The new-comer was led through fresh and silent passages to a large *salon* looking northward, which was apparently one of a set of rooms engaged for the season, and communicating by its light doors with the other apartments. Here were white curtains, a carpet, that semi-comfort which Englishmen require in travelling, and, at the end of the room, windows, which the landlord opened wide to entice that chance customer and induce him to make a longer

stay—lastly, the splendid view of the mountain. A great calm reigned all over that empty hotel; there were no butler, no cook, no waiters, as the staff did not come before the cold weather. The only servants were a native cook, who was a fair hand at *stoffato* and *risotto*, and two stablemen, who put on black coats, white ties, and thin shoes, at meal-times. Fortunately de Géry was not to stay more than a couple of hours—just time to rest, to take from his eyes the feeling of staring at unpolished silver which was there, and from his head that painful sensation of a leaden helmet, due to the heavy, glaring sun.

He stretched himself on the couch, and looked at the admirable landscape. Terraces of airy and quivering olive-trees, darker groves of orange-trees with the trembling sheen of their leaves, seemed to come down from the hills as far as his window, like an amphitheatre of varied verdure. Scattered among the green, were seen, here and there, white villas sparkling in

the sun, among which that of Maurice Trott, the banker, easily known by the rich caprices of its architecture and the height of the palm-trees which surrounded it. The Levantine's house, with its gardens extending to the very windows of the hotel, had for some months sheltered a celebrated artist, the sculptor Bréhat, who was dying of consumption, and was indebted to that princely hospitality for a short prolongation of life. That famed artist, dying so near him—of whom the landlord was so proud that he felt rather inclined to charge for him in his bill—that name of Bréhat, which de Géry had so often heard mentioned in Felicia Ruys' studio, recalled to his mind the fair face and pure outline of the girl, seen for the last time at the Bois de Boulogne, as she passed, leaning on Mora's shoulder. What had become of the unfortunate woman when that stay failed her? Would that lesson be of use to her in the future?

What an extraordinary coincidence! As

he was thus thinking of Felicia, a big white greyhound was gambolling, opposite to him, in an alley of green trees. He could have sworn it was Kadour—same short hair, same red, fine, ferocious mouth. This evoked in his mind all sorts of visions, some charming, some sad. The rich nature he had before his eyes, that high mountain, with blue shadows tarrying in the hollows of the ground, helped, perhaps, his wandering thought.

Under the orange and lemon-trees, cultivated in straight rows and loaded with golden fruit, stretched out fields of violets in regular and serried lines, crossed by little canals, the white stone bordering which contrasted with the surrounding vegetation. An exquisite odour of violets crushed in the sun—that warm, enervating, weakening essence which you find in ladies' boudoirs—was wafted to de Géry, and called up to his mind visions of women—Aline—Felicia—softly gliding through the fairy landscape, in that blue atmosphere, that Elysian light, which

seemed the visible perfume of so many blooming flowers.

Suddenly, the noise of a shutting door woke him out of his light slumber. Somebody had just entered the adjoining room. He heard the rustling of a woman's dress against the thin partition, and the noise of turned leaves, probably of a book which did not offer much interest to the reader; for it was followed by something between a sigh and a yawn which startled him. Was he still sleeping and dreaming? Was not that the cry of the 'jackal in the desert,' which harmonised so well with the burning and heavy temperature outside? Nothing more. He must have been mistaken. He fell asleep again. This time all the confused ideas which haunted him took the form of a dream, a very beautiful dream.

He was travelling with Aline—their honeymoon journey—clear eyes full of faith and love, which knew none but him, and looked at him only. It was this same hotel *salon*—the young

girl sat opposite to him in a white violet-scented morning dress and the beautiful lace of the *corbeille.* They were breakfasting—one of those honeymoon breakfasts, served up as the pair leave their bed, with the sea facing them, and the limpid sky tinging with blue the glass out of which they drink, the eyes into which they look, the future, life, the boundless space, all! The weather, splendid!—the light, invigorating, divine! How happy they were!

All at once, between two kisses, in the midst of their delights, Aline became sad. Her beautiful eyes were suffused with tears. She spoke: 'Felicia is there—you will not love me any more.' He laughed: 'Felicia here, what nonsense!' 'Yes, yes; she is there.' With trembling fingers she pointed to the neighbouring room, whence came the mad bark of a dog, and Felicia's voice, saying: 'Here, Kadour—here, sir!' It was the low, hushed, angry voice of one who is hiding and finds herself suddenly discovered.

Awaking with a start, the disappointed lover found himself in his lonely room, before an empty table, his beautiful dream fled away out of the window, towards the high hill which filled the landscape and seemed to bend towards him.

But, from the next room really came the bark of a dog, and hurried knocks, which shook the door.

'Open! It is I, Jenkins.'

Paul bounded on his couch, amazed. What! —Jenkins here? How was that? Whom was he speaking to? What voice would answer him?—No answer was given. A light foot went to the door, the bolt creaked nervously.

'At last, I have found you!' said the Irishman, stepping in.

Indeed, had he not mentioned his own name, Paul would never have recognised the gentle Jenkins by the loud, brutal, and hoarse voice which he heard through the partition.

'At last I have found you after eight days

of researches and mad drives from Genoa to Nice, and from Nice to Genoa. I knew that you had not gone yet, as the yacht is still riding at anchor in the roads; and I was preparing to inquire at all the inns on the coast, when I remembered Bréhat. I thought you might have wished to see him before leaving. I called upon him, and he told me you were here.

Whom was he speaking to? Why that strange obstinacy in not answering him?

At last a beautiful, mournful voice, which Paul knew so well, vibrated clearly in its turn through the close atmosphere of the hot afternoon:

'Well, yes! here I am, Jenkins. What do you want of me?'

Paul could see through the wall the scornful lips curled down in disgust.

'I am come to prevent your departure, your folly ——'

'What folly? What do you mean? I

have works to execute at Tunis—of course I must go.'

'You don't think of it, my dear child——'

'An end to your fatherly ways, Jenkins. We know what lies concealed under them. Speak to me as you were doing just now. I prefer the bull-dog in you to the crouching cur. I am less afraid of him.'

'Well, I repeat to you that you must be mad to go so far away alone, young and beautiful as you are.'

'Am I not always alone? Can I take Constance with me, at her age?'

'Take me.'

'You?'—she modulated the word like a sneering, snarling laugh. 'And Paris? and your patients? What! deprive society of its Cagliostro!—Never!'

'Well, I have made up my mind to follow you wherever you go,' said Jenkins resolutely.

One moment's pause. Paul was debating with himself whether he ought to listen longer

to that conversation which, he felt, would be full of terrible revelations. But, besides fatigue, an invincible curiosity nailed him to the spot. It was as if the alluring riddle by which he had been so long puzzled and troubled, which still attracted him by a corner of its mysterious veil, was at last about to be explained, and reveal to him whether the brilliant artist concealed a suffering, or a perverse woman. He therefore remained motionless, holding his breath. But he did not feel that he was doing anything mean; for the others, believing themselves alone in the hotel, quite naturally attuned their voices to the height of their passions, and Paul had only to listen passively.

'In short, I ask again, what do you want of me?'

'I want—you.'

'Jenkins!'

'Oh yes! I know. You once forbade me ever to pronounce such words before you.—But others than I have said them to you, and—nearer, too.'

Two nervous steps brought her closer to the philanthropist, so that she could speak in his very face—that broad, sensual face—the withering scorn of her answer.

'Suppose it to be so, you wretch! If I have not known how to defend myself against disgust and weariness, if I have lost my woman's pride, does it belong to you to remind me of it? Are you not the cause of it? Did you not for ever pollute and sadden my life?'

These burning words, rapidly spoken, revealed to the terrified Paul de Géry the horrible scene of that crime, attempted under cover of fatherly affection, which had stained the young girl's mind, and left in it a precocious melancholy, the disenchantment of a life barely begun, and at the corner of her lips that downward curl, which was there like the visible fall of her smile.

'I loved you, and love you still. My passion is my excuse,' answered Jenkins with a hollow voice.

'Well, love me if you like; but I hate you, not only for all the harm you have done me, for all the fair hopes and energies you have blasted in me, but also because you represent in my eyes all that there is most execrable and hideous under the sun—hypocrisy and falsehood. Yes, in that worldly masquerade, among that heap of grimaces and lies, among the crowd of base and unclean conventionalities which have disgusted me to that degree, that I am running away from them, and go into exile in order that I may cease to see them—for I would prefer the prison, the sewer, the street to them all—your mask, O Jenkins, is that which inspires me with the greatest horror. To our French hypocrisy, made up of smiles and politeness, you have added that cordial and boisterous loyalty which is your own. All have been deceived by it. They call you "the good Jenkins," "the honest, upright Jenkins." But I know you, my good man, and in spite of your fine motto, so shamelessly stamped upon your en-

velopes, engraved on your seal and cuff buttons, written on the lining of your hat, and painted on your carriage, I always see the rogue that you are, and which peeps out of every part of your disguise.'

Her voice hissed between her clenched teeth with inexpressible ferocity, and Paul expected every moment some outburst of furious revolt on the part of Jenkins, smarting under such an outrage. But it was not so. That hatred, that scorn, coming from the woman he loved, must have caused him more pain than anger, for he answered with a subdued voice, in a tone of heart-broken gentleness:

'Ah me! how cruel you are! If you but knew the torture you are inflicting on me! Yes, I am a hypocrite; but I was not born such —I became so—the hardships of life made me so. If the wind is against you, and you want to make head, you must tack about. Well, I have tacked about. Accuse my wretched beginnings. My first step in life was a mistake.

But in one thing, you know, I ever was sincere—my passion! Nothing could daunt, subdue it—neither your scorn nor your insulting words, nor all I ever read in your eyes these many years—those eyes which never once smiled upon me, alas! It is my love which gives me the strength to tell you why I am here, after all I have just heard—Listen: You told me one day that what you wanted was a husband, one who would watch over you whilst you were at work, and relieve your poor tired Crenmitz. Those were your words. They tore my heart at the time, because I was not free. But now, all is changed. Will you marry me, Félicia?'

'And your wife?' cried the young girl, whilst Paul was mentally addressing himself the same question.

'My wife is dead.'

'Your wife dead!—Madame Jenkins? Is that true?'

'You did not know the wife I am speaking of. The other was not my wife. When I met

her I was already married in Ireland—years before. A horrible marriage, contracted with the rope round my neck, so to speak. Yes, at twenty-five I had to face this dilemma: either go to prison for debts, or marry Miss Strang, an old fretted and gouty woman, the sister of an usurer who had advanced me five hundred pounds to prosecute my medical studies. I should have preferred the prison; but weeks and months subdued my courage, and I married Miss Strang, who brought me as her dowry my note-of-hand. Can you conceive my life between those two monsters—a cold, jealous woman on one side, and her brother watching and following me everywhere on the other? I might have run away, but one thing kept me there—the brother was said to be immensely rich, and I wished at least to receive the price of my meanness. I tell you everything, you see! But I was well punished, believe me. Old Strang died insolvent—he had ruined himself by gambling, though he concealed the fact.

Then, I put my rheumatic wife under the care of a private doctor, and I came to France, to begin life again, to lead a life of privation and misery. But, this time, I had on my side experience, my hatred and contempt of mankind, and my recovered liberty; for I could not suspect that the horrible chain of that cursed marriage, which I left so far away behind me, could again hinder my movements. Happily it is all over now—I am free!'

'Yes, Jenkins, you are free. But why don't you marry the poor woman who so long shared your life—humble and devoted as we all knew her?'

'Oh,' said he, with a burst of sincerity, 'between my two curses, I think I should prefer the other, where I could, at least, openly manifest my indifference or hatred. But the atrocious comedy of conjugal love, of unwearied happiness, when I have, for such a long time, loved you only, had no thought but for you! There is no torture equal to that upon this

earth. Judging by myself, the unfortunate woman, when we parted, at last, must have heaved a sigh of relief, uttered a cry of joy. It is the only farewell I expected from her.'

'But what forced you to so much constraint?'

'Everything—Paris, society, public opinion. Married before the world, we were bound——'

'Well, and now?'

'Now there is one thing which overrules all—the fear of losing you—of never seeing you more. Ah! when I heard of your flight, when I saw over the door of your house the bill *To let,* I felt that I had enough of pretences and grimaces, that the only thing that remained for me to do was to go, to run after my happiness which you carried away with you. You left Paris—I left it too. You sold your furniture—mine is going to be sold also.'

'And she?' asked Felicia with a shudder; 'she, the irreproachable, the upright woman, who has never been suspected by any one,

where will she go? what will become of her? And you come here to propose me her place? —the place of another, and in what hell, too? And your motto, my good Jenkins, my virtuous Jenkins, what will you do with it? "Do good and expect no return," eh! old fellow?'

To that taunting laugh, which must have marked his face like the lash of a whip, and brought the blush of shame upon his cheeks, the poor man answered pantingly:

'Enough, enough. Do not scoff so. It is really too horrible. Are you not touched by a love like mine, which sacrifices everything to you—fortune, honour, consideration—all? Look at me; however well my mask might have been tied on my face, I tore it off before all, and now, the hypocrite—look—there he is.'

Paul heard the dull thud of two knees falling upon the floor; and stammering, mad with love, thus prostrated before her, Jenkins conjured her to marry him, to give him the right to follow her everywhere, to defend her;

and when his voice failed him, strangled in a passionate sob, which seemed to rise from the depths of his soul, and so full of anguish that any heart would, one should have thought, have been moved, chiefly before the spectacle of that splendid calm nature, in that voluptuous and perfumed atmosphere—still Felicia was not touched. As haughty as ever :

'An end to this,' said she roughly. 'What you ask of me is impossible. We have nothing to conceal from one another; after your late confession, let me make one in my turn which, though it may cost my pride a good deal, is worthy of your perseverance—I was—Mora's mistress !'

Paul knew that. And yet, it was so pitiful, so sad, to hear that clear pure voice making such a confession, in the midst of that blue atmosphere, intoxicating with aromas, that he felt his heart overwhelmed with sorrow, and, in his mouth, that bitter taste of tears which a silent regret leaves behind it.

'I knew it,' said Jenkins, with a strangled voice. 'I have in my possession the letters you wrote him.'

'My letters?'

'There they are—take them back. I know them by heart—I have read them so often! Ah, what tortures for a loving heart! But what tortures had I not felt before! When I think that it was I—that Mora——'

He stopped to take breath:

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

'What a number of pearls he swallowed! I warned him. In vain. At last I lost all control over myself—"You wish to burn, you wretch," thought I; "well, then, burn . . . ."'

Paul rose up frightened. Must he become the confidant of a crime?

He was spared the shame of hearing more.

A loud knock, at his door this time, told him that the *calesino* was ready.

'Eh, *Signor Francese*——'

In the next room, reigned a sudden silence, then came a whisper. Somebody was there, near them, who had heard . . . Paul went down hurriedly. He longed to be out of that room, and escape the haunting horror of so much disclosed infamy.

As the post-chaise began to move, he perceived, between those white curtains which float from all the windows in the south of France, a pale face surrounded by magnificent hair, and large burning eyes which were watching him. But he looked at Aline's portrait, and that glance sufficed to dispel the troublous vision. And now, for ever cured of his old love, he travelled until evening through the fairy landscape, with the pretty bride of the breakfast—you know—who had in the folds of her modest dress, and in her virgin mantle, all the violets of Bordighera.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FIRST NIGHT OF 'RÉVOLTE.'

'COME down for the first act!'

Thus shouted the stage-manager, standing at the bottom of the actors' staircase, his hands to his mouth like a speaking trumpet. And his call went up, rolled and died away in the passages full of the noise of slamming doors, hurried steps, and desperate calls to the coiffeur and dressers; whilst on the landings of the many stories, all the personages of the first act of *Révolte* appeared successively, slow and majestic, keeping their heads straight lest they should disturb the least thing in their attires:—elegant and modern ball-costumes, new shoes creaking with every step, the silky rustling of

ladies' trains, the clinking of rich bracelets thrown up the arm to button a glove.

All those people appear agitated, nervous, pale under their rouge; and over the satined shoulders, learnedly prepared and sprinkled with flake-white, a shiver is seen to pass, like the waving of *moiré* silk. All mouths are parched, and therefore few words are spoken. The most confident, even though they smile, have in their eyes, in their voices, something which betrays the hesitation of an absent mind, the dread of the battle under the flare of the foot-lights—that greatest, most powerful attraction of an actor's profession, its piquant and ever-renewed charm.

The stage is alive with the bustle of scene-shifters who hurry hither and thither, jostling one another in the soft snowy light coming from above, which, presently, when the curtain rises, will be absorbed in the brilliant illumination of the house. Cardailhac, in his black coat and white tie, his hat cocked on one side of his

head, casts a last glance on the decoration, hurries the workers, and congratulates the 'walking lady' on her toilet. He hums, is resplendent, superb. You would never suspect what terrible anxiety agitates him. Drawn into the vortex of the Nabob's ruin, he is playing his last card this evening; for, if the new play is not a great success, he will be compelled to leave unpaid that marvellous scenery, those rich silks at one hundred francs a *mètre*. He will then be bankrupt for the fourth time. Pshaw! The lessee is full of confidence. Success, like all those monsters who devour men, favours youth; and the new name of that unknown author flatters the superstition of the gambler.

André Maranne is not so confident. As the dread moment approaches, he loses his faith in his play, is frightened by the sight of the house, which he looks at through the peep-hole in the curtain, as he would in a stereoscope.

A full house—yes, full to the ceiling, notwithstanding the advanced season, and the taste

of fashionable society for early retirement to the country. Cardailhac, an open enemy of nature and rural life, doing his best to keep Parisians in Paris as long as he can, has succeeded in filling his house with as brilliant a company as in mid-winter. Fifteen hundred heads are swarming there, under the chandelier; some upright, some bent down; others turning, inquiring, full of lights and shadows; some closely packed in the dark corners, under the lower tier of boxes; others, in the boxes, when the doors are opened, receiving the full light of the corridor, reverberated by the white wall. It is the same public that you ever see on a 'first night,' that 'All Paris' which you meet everywhere, which carries those envied places by storm, when it cannot obtain them as a favour, or require them as a due.

In the stalls, all the men of fashion—members of clubs, shiny skulls, wide partings of thin hair, light-coloured gloves, opera-glasses

turned in every direction. In the galleries a mixture of 'worlds' and toilets—white bonnets, pink bonnets, diamonds and rouge—well-known names, ever present on such solemn occasions as this, an annoying promiscuity which places the reserved and chaste smile of an honest woman next to the bold burning looks of Kohl, and the painted lips of others like her. Above these, the boxes present the same confusion—actresses, *demi-monde*, ministers, ambassadors, renowned authors and critics—the latter, stern and grave, knit their brows, sit sideways in their stalls with the affected arrogance of incorruptible judges. The lowest side boxes, more splendid and luminous than the rest, are occupied by celebrated bankers, *décolleté* and bare-armed women, streaming with precious stones like the Queen of Sheba visiting Solomon. On the left, one of those spacious boxes, quite empty, attracts attention by its strange fantastic decoration and its Moorish lantern. Over all this assemblage

floats an impalpable dust—the vibration of the gas and its smell, which mingle with all Parisian pleasures; the short, shrill, hissing sound, like the breathing of a consumptive person, which accompanies the sharp motion of fans. Last of all, *ennui*, that dull feeling of weariness induced by the everlasting sight of the same people at the same places, with all their defects and poses—that uniformity of worldly assemblages which, every winter, introduces in Paris a sort of provincial society, tittle-tattling, scandal-loving, more exclusive than the very 'province' itself.

Maranne noticing that dulness and weariness of the public, and thinking how much his modest life, hitherto all 'hopeward,' might be affected by the success of his drama, anxiously asked himself what he might do to establish sympathy between himself and those thousands of beings, to tear them away from their pre-occupation about themselves, their looks and attitudes, to establish one single

current, which would bring back to him and fix on his play those absent minds attuned to different keys, and so hard to keep in harmonious unison. He instinctively looked for friendly faces towards a front box filled with the Joyeuses. On the front seat, Elise and the little girls, behind them Aline and the old father—a delightful family group, which, among the other spectators, was like a bouquet steeped in dew in the midst of artificial flowers. And, whilst 'All Paris' was scornfully inquiring 'Who were those people?' our poet remitted his fate to those little fairy hands which had put fresh gloves on for the occasion, and would, presently, when the proper time came, give the signal for applause.

'Clear the stage, quick!'

Maranne has just time to slip behind a side-scene, when all at once he hears, as if from a great distance, the first words of his play which rise like a flight of timid birds in the silence of the immense house. Terrible moment this!

Whither shall he go? What can he do? Remain stuck against a post, listening, with a heart full of tremulous anguish, encouraging the actors, when he himself so much requires encouragement? No, he prefers looking at the danger face to face; and, therefore, slipping out by the little door which leads into the corridor behind the boxes, he goes to a box which a woman opens for him.

'Hush, it is I,' he whispers.

Somebody is sitting there, alone, in the back—a woman whom all Paris knows, and who is concealing herself. André sits near her; and, pressing close to each other, invisible to all, mother and son assist at the representation in great tremor.

The first feeling of the public was one of great stupefaction. That *Théâtre des Nouveautés*, situated in the very heart of the Boulevard, where its portico spreads itself out in the light, among the great restaurants and fashionable clubs, that theatre where men brought their

mistresses to while away the time between dinner and supper, to hear one or two acts of licentious *badinage*, had become, under the direction of its witty manager, the most run after of all Parisian spectacles. It did not confine itself to any one branch of entertainment, but tried them all in turn, from the operetta, where the actresses show as much nakedness as they dare, to the great modern drama, where our morals are laid bare before our eyes. Cardailhac was chiefly anxious to justify his title of *Directeur des Nouveautés*, and, since the Nabob's millions buoyed up the concern, he did his best to prepare, for the loungers of Boulevard macadam, the most dazzling surprises. That of this evening threw all the previous ones in the shade—the play was in verse, and—moral.

A moral play!

The old monkey had understood that the moment had come to try that dodge, and he tried it. After the first minute's astonishment,

after a few exclamations of disappointment, here and there in the boxes—'Hallo! it is in verse—' the house began to feel the charm of that vigorous and healthy work. It was as if some genius had poured over it, in its close atmosphere, some fresh and sharp essence, an elixir of life perfumed with mountain thyme.

'How nice! How soothing!'

Such was the general cry. Each verse produced a little flutter of satisfaction, a calm, comfortable repose. He felt soothed, that fat Hemerlingue, gasping for breath in his box, like a pig in a trough of purple satin. So did that tall Suzanne Bloch feel soothed, with her hair *à l'antique*, and little curls passing beneath her gold diadem; and Amy Férat, dressed all in white, like a bride, with orange blossoms stuck anyhow in her hair, she too, I assure you, felt soothed.

There were present a crowd of creatures, some of them very fat—unclean grease collected in all sorts of seraglios—with triple chins,

stupid-looking; others absolutely green, in spite of their rouge—as if they had been soaked in a bath of that arseniate of copper known as *vert de Paris* in the trade—so wrinkled and faded that they tried to hide themselves in the back of their boxes, and only showed part of a white arm or a shoulder, which they thrust forward because it was still round and plump.

There were also some of those effeminate worn-out dandies—called *petits crevés* in those days—their necks stretched forward, their lower lips hanging down, too weak to stand on their legs, or to articulate a whole word.

Well, all those people exclaimed together:

'How nice!—how soothing!'

Handsome Moëssard hummed those words under his little fair moustache; and his queen, in her front box, in the lower tier, translated it in her barbarous tongue. Yes, that was it, quite; it soothed them all—though they did not say of what enervating work, of what forced task of the idle and useless, they were

soothed. The confused mingling of all those kindly murmurs was beginning to give the house the physiognomy it generally wears on great nights. Success was in the air, the faces were clearing up, a gleam of enthusiasm added something to the beauty of the women, and kindly eyes sparkled their approval. André, near his mother, felt his frame quivering with the excitement of an unknown pleasure—the joy felt in stirring crowds, which even a street-singer experiences, when, with a few sympathising notes, he sings a patriotic song, and moves the hearts of his hearers. Presently was heard a loud hum, soon changed into a great tumult. The people jeered, sneered, bustled about. What did it all mean? Some accident on the stage, no doubt! André, bending forward, turned his frightened eyes towards the actors, as much astonished as himself, and saw all the glasses turned in the direction of the great side-box, which had hitherto remained empty. A gentleman had just entered it, and

seated himself in gloomy solitude, leaning his two elbows on the velvet ledge, after having taken his opera-glass out of its case.

In ten days the Nabob had grown twenty years older. If those violent natures of the South are rich in outbursts of enthusiasm, in jets of irresistible fire, they also are apt to sink down more utterly exhausted than others. Ever since his invalidation, the unfortunate man had shut himself up in his bed-room, drawn the curtains, and refused to see the light, or to cross the threshold, beyond which life invited him. He forgot his engagements and promises; his house was deluged with notices of protested bills and summonses. The Levantine had gone to a watering-place with her shampooer, completely indifferent to the ruin of her house. Bompain, the man with the fez, bewildered amidst the demands for money, which poured in on every side, did not know how to manage with his unfortunate master, who persisted in remaining in bed, and turned his face to the wall as soon as business

was mentioned. The old mother alone remained to make head against the tempest, with her limited but upright understanding—a mere village widow, she, but one who knew what a stamped paper and a signature meant, and who regarded honour as the most precious good on earth. Her yellow bonnet was seen on all the floors of the house. She checked bills, introduced reform in the service, fearing neither clamours nor humiliations. The good woman was seen at all hours of the day walking with long strides across the Place Vendôme, gesticulating, speaking to herself, ejaculating: '*Tè*, I am going to the lawyer.' She did not consult her son, except when it was absolutely necessary; and when compelled to do so, she did it with a few discreet words, avoiding even to look at him. A despatch from de Géry, dated from Marseilles, and announcing that he was coming with ten millions, was the only thing which could draw him out of his torpor. Ten millions!—that is to say, bankruptcy

avoided, the possibility of recovering himself, and beginning life anew. And immediately our *méridional* bounded up from the bottom of the abyss, intoxicated with joy and hope. He gave orders to open his windows, to bring in the newspapers. What a splendid opportunity was this first night of *Révolte* to show himself to the Parisians, who thought he had sunk down and disappeared for ever, to go and resume his place in the great vortex, by the broad entrance of his box at the *Nouveautés*. His mother, warned by her instinct, insisted a little to keep him at home. Paris frightened her now. She wished she could have taken him away to some unknown corner of the south of France, there to tend him, together with her eldest boy, —two men whom the great town had crushed. But he was his own master. It was impossible to resist that will of a man spoilt by wealth. She helped him to dress, therefore, made him 'look handsome,' as she said laughing; and, when he left, she watched him going with a

certain pride. He looked all right again, splendid, and had nearly recovered from the terrible dejection of the last few days.

When he arrived at the theatre, Jansoulet soon perceived the sensation which his presence created in the house. Accustomed to those curious ovations, he generally met them without the least embarrassment, with his good broad smile; but now the manifestation was a hostile, an indignant one almost.

'What! he, here!'

'Look at him!'

'What impudence!'

These words rose from the stalls, with many other exclamations. Having withdrawn himself from the world, and lived for some days past in complete solitude, he was not aware of the public exasperation against him, of the dithyrambic homilies on the corrupting influence of his wealth, which the papers had scattered abroad—brilliant articles, full of hypocritical cant, with which public opinion, from time to

time, avenges itself on the innocent for all its own concessions to the guilty. That terrible manifestation caused at first more sorrow than anger to Jansoulet. He felt very much moved, and tried to conceal his confusion behind his opera-glass. He examined the least details of the scenery, sitting sideways, yet unable to escape the scandalous observation of which he was the victim, and which made his ears tingle, his temple beat, and filled the moist lenses of his glass with multicoloured whirling circles—the first signs of a congestion of blood.

When the act was over, and the drop fell, he still preserved that same attitude of motionless embarrassment. But the hum and loud whispering, no longer restrained by the play, became more distinct; and at last some curious people, bolder than others, having changed places in order the better to see him, he was compelled to leave his box, and to rush out into the corridor, like a wild beast escaped from the arena, and running through the circus. In the

low, narrow, circular passage, he fell into the midst of a compact crowd of dandies, journalists, women in bonnets and without cloaks, laughing, as is incumbent in their profession, and throwing themselves back, in their senseless demonstrations of enjoyment, till their heads came in contact with the wall. From the open boxes, the tenants of which were trying to breathe among this swarming crowd, issued unconnected fragments of conversation:

'Admirable play! Written in a tone, and with a freshness of feeling——'

'The Nabob! What impudence!'

'Yes, it is truly soothing. You feel better——'

'How is it they have not arrested him yet?'

'They say he is quite young; it is his first play.'

'Bois-Landry at Mazas! It is not possible. Look, the Marchioness is there, facing us, in the first gallery, with a new bonnet——'

'What does that prove? She does what

she is bound to, as a *lanceuse*. Pretty her bonnet!—the colours of Desgranges' horse.'

'And Jenkins; what has become of him?'

'At Tunis with Felicia. Old Brahim saw them there together. It appears the Bey is going to follow the pearl *régime*.'

'Ough!'

Further on, sweet voices were whispering:

'Go, father, go. See how lonely he is—poor man!'

'But, my dears, I don't know him.'

'Only bow to him. Do something to let him see he is not altogether abandoned.'

Immediately, a little old gentleman, very red in the face, and wearing a white cravat, rushed forward in the direction of the Nabob, and respectfully took off his hat to him.

With what an amiable and eager smile of gratitude was that solitary bow returned!—a bow from a man the Nabob did not know, had never seen, and who nevertheless had had considerable influence over his destiny; for, had it

not been for old Monsieur Joyeuse the President of the *Territoriale* would no doubt have had the same fate as the Marquis of Bois-Landry. It is thus that, in the tangled web of modern society—that great texture of complicated interests, ambitions, services accepted or rendered —all the 'worlds' communicate mysteriously together; the highest and humblest existences, all united with one another from underneath. That will explain the strange medley, the complex and devious course of this study of manners; will show how the scattered threads were collected together by a writer who, anxious to draw a faithful picture, weaves them together now in his dramatic story.

Eyes staring vaguely in the distance, a sudden aimless change of direction, a hat suddenly put on the head, and sunk down as far as the eyes—all this, the Nabob had to bear, within ten minutes. All those pantomimes were so many signs, so many manifestations of that terrible ostracism of Parisian society, in

which he had neither family connections nor serious ties of any sort, and whose contempt isolated him more effectually than respect isolates a sovereign when he leaves his palace. He staggered with embarrassment and shame. Somebody said aloud, 'He is drunk!' and all that the poor man could do, was to go and shut himself in the *salon* of his box. Usually that little room was filled during the *entr'actes* with speculators and journalists. They laughed, and smoked, and made a great noise. But this evening, nobody! The abstention of Cardailhac, that time-server, gave Jansoulet the true measure of his disgrace.

'What have I done, then? Why does Paris reject me?'

Thus did he commune with himself in a loneliness which appeared greater from all the surrounding noises—keys roughly turned in the locks of neighbouring doors, and the thousand exclamations of people who are enjoying themselves.

All at once, the freshness of the decoration which surrounded him, the Moorish lantern, whose strange shadows fell upon the silk of the ottoman and the walls, recalled to his mind the date of his arrival. Six months—only six months since he came to Paris! And everything gone, everything squandered in six months! He remained sunk in a kind of torpor, from which the applause and enthusiastic 'bravos' awoke him. Yes, that *Révolte* was a decided success. They had come to strong and satirical passages; the lashing, somewhat emphatic tirades, so full of youthful sincerity, made all hearts vibrate, after the idyllic effusions of the beginning. Jansoulet felt inclined to listen and look on also. After all, this theatre was his. His place in his box cost him more than one million of francs. He had bought dearly enough the right to occupy it.

He is once more seated in the front of his box. In the house, the heat was heavy, stifling, stirred rather than dissipated by the fretting

fans which send the sparkles of their spangles through the impalpable silent breaths of the assembly. They were all attentively listening to an indignant and withering speech against plunderers and pilferers—so common at that time—who played a leading part in the world, after having lurked in the darkest corners, to strip the unwary travellers. When Maranne was writing those beautiful lines, he certainly had very different persons from the Nabob in view. But the public saw an allusion here; and whilst a triple round of applause hailed the end of the tirade, all heads turned to the box on the left-hand side, with an indignant and openly insulting motion. Poor man, actually pilloried in his own theatre! A pillory which cost him so much money, too! This time, he did not try to avoid the affront, but planted himself resolutely, and with crossed arms, before that crowd of people who were looking at him, before those hundreds of faces turned up sneeringly towards him; and his eyes flashed

defiance to that 'All Paris,' who took him for their scape-goat, and drove him into the wilderness, after having loaded him with all their crimes.

A pretty society indeed, to dare make such a manifestation against him! Opposite him the box of bankrupt bankers—the wife and her lover in front, the husband behind, grave and hidden in the shadow. Next to these, the not unfrequent trio of a mother who has married her daughter to her own lover. Next, unholy couples, women exhibiting the price of their shame in diamond bracelets and necklaces, riveted around their arms and necks like dog's collars; stuffing themselves with bonbons, which they devour with greedy, brutal appetite, because they know that those who pay them like them to lower themselves to the rank of beasts. And those groups of effeminate dandies, their necks bare, their eyebrows painted, who, at Compiègne, which they visited as guests, exhibited, to the admiration

of their friends, embroidered cambric shirts, and white satin stays! Those minions, like those of Agrippa's time, called each other *Mon cœur—Ma chère belle.* Yes, they were all there—all the scandals and turpitudes, all the consciences either sold or open to a bid, all the vices of an epoch without grandeur and without originality, an epoch which tried on the ridicules of all other times, and which exhibited at *Bullier*[1] a Duchess—a Minister's wife—the rival of the most shameless dancers of the place!

And those were the people who repelled him, drove him away, and cried out to him:

'Leave us. You are unworthy of our society!'

'Unworthy!—I, unworthy! I am a hundred times worthier than you all, wretches! You reproach me my millions! Who helped me to devour them? Thou, cowardly, treacherous companion, who hidest in the corner of thy box, the obesity of a sick pasha; I made thy fortune at the same time as mine, in the days when we

[1] *Bullier*, a notorious public ball in Paris.

used to share like brothers. Thou, pale Marquis—I paid the club one hundred thousand francs to save thee the shame of a public expulsion. Thou, impudent wench, whom I covered with jewels, allowing thee to pass thyself off for my mistress, because such was the fashion in our society—though I never required any return for my money. And thou, shameless scribbler, who hast all the slush of thy inkstand under thy skull, instead of brains, and on thy conscience as much leprosy as there is on the skin of thy queen—thou thinkest that I have not paid thee the price of thy worth, and that is why thou insultest—— Yes, yes; look at me, scum!—I feel proud—for I am better than you all.'

All that, he said mentally, in a delirium of rage, as could be seen by the quivering of his livid lips. Madness was rising to his brain; and the unfortunate man was on the point of shouting it all aloud, in the midst of the silence, of soothing his feelings by returning outrage for

outrage, and—who knows—perhaps of rushing into the midst of the crowd, and killing one of them—ah, by heaven! kill *one*—when he felt a slight touch on his shoulder. He turned round and saw a fair head, candid and grave, and two hands held out to him, which he grasped convulsively, like a drowning man.

'Ah! dear—dear'—stammered the poor man. But he had not the strength to say more. This sweet emotion, which surprised him in the midst of his fit of rage, melted it into a sob full of tears, and blood, and strangled words. His face became purple. He made a sign: 'Take me away,' and totteringly, leaning on de Géry's arm, he had only strength to cross the entrance of his box, and reach the corridor, where he fell down.

'Bravo! Bravo!' cried the house, at the end of the actor's tirade; and the applause sounded like a shower of hail, and the stamping of the crowd was truly enthusiastic. In the meanwhile, the big, lifeless body was being

painfully raised by the scene-shifters, and carried across the blazing side-stage, through a crowd of curious, attracted there by the night's success, who hardly noticed the passage of the inert mass, borne in the arms of men, like a victim of a street row. They laid him upon a couch in the store-room—Paul de Géry standing by him, with a doctor and two men who did their best to succour him. Cardailhac, very busy with his new play, had promised to come presently, to inquire after Jansoulet—when the play was over.

They tried everything, blood-letting, cupping-glasses, and mustard-poultices. It was all in vain. Nothing brought even a quiver of life on the epiderm of the patient, insensible to the various treatments applied in cases of apoplexy. Complete helplessness seemed to have marked him already for death, and prepared him for the rigidity of a corpse; and that in the most sinister place of the world—a chaos, lighted by a dark lantern, where lie, pell-mell, in

the dust, all the refuse of former plays—gilt furniture, hangings with brilliant fringe couches, boxes, card-tables, disjointed staircases and balusters, amidst ropes and pulleys—a whole maze of unserviceable stage property, spoiled and broken. Bernard Jansoulet, lying among all those waifs and strays, his shirt cut open on his chest, pale and bleeding, was indeed one of those who have been wrecked on life's ocean—thrown ashore, together with some lamentable fragments of his artificial wealth, all crushed and bruised by the Parisian vortex. Paul stood there, full of sadness and sorrow, contemplating that short-nosed face, which, in its helplessness, preserved the good-natured yet angry expression of an inoffensive being, who has tried to defend himself before dying, and has not had time to injure anyone. He accused himself of impotence in serving him efficaciously. What had become of his fine project for leading Jansoulet safely through the quagmires, and saving him from ambushes?

All he had been able to do was to save him a few millions—and these had come too late.

The windows were opened on the round balcony of the Boulevard, and let in the noisy and luminous agitation from outside. The theatre was surrounded by a ribbon of burning gas, a zone of fire. This gave a darker look to the deep streets, tipped here and there by the lanterns of rolling carriages, which looked like stars travelling on an obscure sky. The play was over, and the people were coming out. The crowd, black and compact on the porch, scattered themselves along the wide footpaths, spreading through the town the news of a great success, and repeating a name hitherto unknown, but which to-morrow would hail as triumphant and celebrated. The night was admirable. The windows of restaurants shone merrily, and rows of belated coaches were on their way home. That festive tumult which the Nabob had loved so much, which tallied so well with his own adventurous existence, re-

vived him for one moment. His lips moved; and his large eyes, turning towards de Géry, took, just before he died, a painful, imploring, protesting expression, as if to call him to bear witness to one of the greatest, most cruel acts of injustice that Paris had ever perpetrated.

THE END.

LONDON: PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
AND PARLIAMENT STREET

00076883

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018